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A RELIGIOUS FAST.

Rules for obſerving it:

With the general Unavailableneſs of Faſts conſidered.

Together with the great Duty of

PUBLIC-SPIRIT,

or

Love of our Country.

And

The general Influence of RELIGION upon STATES and GOVERNMENTS.

In FIVE SERMONS,

On Account of the late and repeated Faſts for the preſent War, and now threatned Invaſion of our Country.

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VINCIT AMOR PATRIÆ.

Printed by the Editor, MDCCXCVII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

The following Diſcourſes being Parts of a Syſtem of Divinity, now reprinting by the Editor, need no Apology for their Compoſition.

The only Reaſon for their SEPARATE (*)Appearance is the Exigency of the Times, to which the Editor preſumes they are not unſuitable.

From the ſmall Encouragement given to Labours of this Kind, and the Precariouſneſs of their Reception, the Editor only offers a few Copies, (12) by his own Labour, and trite Letter, to be enlarged, (if required,) to any Extent.

He hath only to add, that, from the general Intention of the original Work, and its ſtanding Uſe, (from which this is only a ſupernumerary Copy, printed beforehand for this Purpoſe,) no particular Application to the Times, (ſee page 50,) could be made: The Editor's Deſign being not more to oblidge the PRESENT, than the FUTURE Generations of Mankind, to whom any immediate pointed Addreſs might hereafter be unapplicable.

Philo-Patria, the Editor.

(*) The Work from which theſe Diſcourſes are taken, (fourteen Copies only,) will not be compleated, upon the beſt Calculation, (by the ſingle Labour of the Editor, if he lives,) theſe ten Years: long before which Time, it is hoped, by the Bleſſing of Providence on the wiſe Counſels & manly Efforts of our Country, Peace and Proſperity will be eſtabliſhed among us, to the ſincere Wiſh and Deſire of all its Inhabitants.

SERMON I.

religious Faſt, - how beſt obſerved.

Matt. vi. 16. "When ye faſt, be not as the Hy-
"pocrites."

The peculiar Recommendation of the Chriſtian Religion in all its Parts, is, that Solidity of Argument by which it is enforced: Mere Shew and Oſtentation, Hypocriſy and Diſſimulation, both before God and Man, being every where renounced by it; and Men are enjoined in the genuine and thorough Practice of their Duty, by the moſt weighty of Conſiderations from the Preſence of God, who intimately beholds all the Motions of their Hearts; and, conſequently, ſees with what Ardor or Coldneſs they enter into his Services; Religion not ſo much conſiſting in outward Show, as in inward Piety, real Reformation and Amendment; "for he is not a Chriſtian which is one outwardly; neither is that Chriſtianity which is outward in the Fleſh: but he is

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a Chriſtian which is one inwardly: and Chriſtianity is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; whoſe Praiſe is not of Men, but of God."

"When ye faſt, be not as the Hypocrites, of a ſad Countenance; for, they disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to faſt. Verily, I ſay unto you, they have their Reward. But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thy Head, and waſh thy Face; that thou appear not unto Men to faſt, but unto thy Father, which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly."

The Expediency of publick and national Solemnities, whether of Thanks-giving, or of Humiliation, (A) is evident to any reaſonable and good Man, who

(A) As National Humiliations are frequently appointed for the deprecating the Horrors of War, and imploring Succeſs upon our Councils and Arms, it may be of ſome Service, to inquire how far War is lawful, and by what Means we may render it moſt ſucceſful.

War is proved to be lawful, - Firſt, by the Baptiſt's Anſwer to the Soldiers, when they came to his Baptiſm. (Luke iii. 14.) — 2dly, by Chriſt's commending the Centurion's Faith. — 3dly, by St. Paul's uſing a Band of Soldiers againſt the Treachery of the Jews. — And 4thly, by St. Peter's baptizing Cornelius, without his giving-over his Military Employment.

We may conclude, then, that a Soldier is One of a lawful, neceſſary and commendable Profeſſion. — *Rei Militaris Virtus præſtat cæteris Virtutibus: Omnia noſtra Studia latent in Tutelâ ac Præſidio bellicæ Virtutis; et ſimulatquè increbuit Suſpicio Tumultûs, Artes illicò noſtræ conticeſcunt*

who conſiders a Nation as conſiſting of Individuals, and

ceſcunt. — Omnia quidem quæ ſunt in Imperio, et Statu Civitatis, ab iis defendi et firmari putamus, qui Militari Virtute antecellunt. — Nihil neque firmius, neque felicius, neque laudabilius Reipublicæ, in quâ Milites abundant. See No. 152. of the Spectator. Indeed,

Without theſe Authorities, War is often neceſſary, and even lawful, - To repel Invaſions, - To diſappoint the Ambition of aſpiring Neighbours, — To reſiſt the Encroachments of Tyranny, (*Injuriâ Injuriam cohibere licet,*) — To preſerve Liberty, — To maintain juſt Rights, and to ſecure the Happineſs, Proſperity, and Dignity of a Nation; War being only ordained to make Men live in Peace. *Uſus profectò, Fructuſque Victoriæ optimus, Pax eſt; nequè ad alium quàm ad Pacis Finem juſta Bella ſuſcipiuntur.* Laws with Penalties are made for the Government of the Simple and Weak; But Power is the Law of Laws, and there is no Diſputing with it, but upon the Sword's Point.

It is an excellent Property of a good and wiſe Prince to uſe War as he does Phyſick, carefully, unwillingly, and ſeaſonably: for Neceſſity only makes War to be juſt. Where Lenity cannot reclaim, There Severity muſt correct. But,

To determine rightly in theſe Matters belongs to the Supreme Juriſdiction: and the Queſtion ought to be conſidered very conſciencioufly. For Wars begun, or continued without Neceſſity, are unchriſtian and inhuman: as many Murders are committed, and Lives loſt in them, beſides the innumerable Sins and Miſeries of all other Sorts, with which they are always attended.

"*Bella! Horrida Bella!*

Nobilitas cum Plebe perit, latèque vagatur
Enſis, et a nullo revocatum Pectore Ferrum
Stat Cruor in Templis, multâque rubentia Cæde
Lubrica Saxa madent; Nulli ſua profuit Ætas;
Non Senis extremum pigvit vergentibus Annis
Præcipitaſſe Diem, nec primo in Limine Vitæ
Infantis

and the Supreme Governor of the World as bleſſing or

Infantis miſeri naſcentia rumpere Fata.
Crimine quo Parvi Cædem potuêre mereri?
Nulla Salus Bello: Pacem te poſcimus omnes,"

But Subjects, in their private Capacity, are incompetent Judges of what is requiſite for the Public Welfare; nor can the Guardians of it permit them to act upon their Judgment, were they to make one.

Subjects, therefore, may lawfully ſerve in Wars, which their Superiors have unlawfully undertaken; excepting, perhaps, ſuch as are notoriouſly unjuſt. In others, it is no more the Buſineſs of the Soldiary to conſider the Grounds of their Sovereign's taking up Arms, than it is the Buſineſs of the Executioner to examine whether the Magiſtrate hath paſſed a right Sentence. (See the 37th. Article of Religion.) But ſurely it is incumbent on every Man, who is intruſted with a Military Command, by all Means in his Power, to mitigate the Severities, and alleviate the Horrors of War, ſo far as is conſiſtent with his Duty to his Country, and the Aſſertion and Maintenance of its juſt Rights. Courage and Humanity are eſſential Qualifications of a true Soldier: If he poſſeſſes the former, but is deſtitute of the latter, his Courage degenerates into Ferocity, and he is intitled to no higher Rank in the Scale of Beings than that of ſavage Tygers: but with Courage, Juſtice & Moderation, we look up to him, as to an exalted Character, as the Guardian of our Peace, - the Protector of our Property, and our Security in all things.

There are ſome Men, who naturally have an Heroick Turn of Mind. The wiſe Creator has adapted the natural Genius of the human Species with a ſurprizing Aptneſs for the State of Life in which they are placed in this World.

As God knew what degenerate, ambitious, and revengeful Creatures we are, - as He knew that Innocence could not be protected, - Property and Liberty ſecured, - nor the Lives of Mankind preſerved, from the lawleſs Hands of Ambition, Avarice, and Tyranny, without the

or puniſhing that Nation, according to the Behaviour

the Uſe of the Sword; - as He knew this would be the only Method to preſerve Mankind from univerſal Slavery, he has formed ſome Men for this dreadful Work, and fired them with a Martial Spirit, and a glorious Love of Danger. Such a Spirit, though moſt pernicious when ungoverned by the Rules of Juſtice and Benevolence to Mankind, is a publick Bleſſing when rightly directed. - Such a Spirit, under God, has often mortified the Inſolence of Tyrants, checked the Encroachments of arbitrary Power, and delivered enſlaved and ruined Nations. It is as neceſſary, in its Place, for our Subſiſtence in ſuch a World as this, as any of the gentler Genius' among Mankind; and it is derived from the ſame Divine Original. He that winged the Imagination of an *Homer*, or a *Milton*; he that gave Penetration to the Mind of *Newton*; he that made *Tubal-Cain* an Inſtructor of Artificers in Braſs and Iron, and gave Skill to *Bezaleel* and *Aholiab* in curious Works; indeed, he that ſent out *Paul* and his Brethren to conquer the Nations with the gentler Weapons of "plain Truth," Miracles and the Love of a crucified Saviour: He, even that ſame Gracious Power, has formed and raiſed up an *Alexander*, a *Julius Cæſar*, and a *William*; and inſpired them with this enterprizing, intrepid Spirit; the Two firſt to ſcourge a guilty World, and the Laſt to ſave a Nation on the Brink of Ruin. There is ſomething *glorious* and *inviting* in Danger, to ſuch Minds; and their Breaſts beat with a generous Ardour when it appears.

Seamen and Soldiers are the Walls of Kingdoms; and, (under God,) their Prudence and Courage are the People's Defence and Safeguard. *Plutarch* tells us, There were two Virtues in *Hannibal*, which made him proſperous and ſucceſsful: there was in him *Plurimum Audaciæ ad capienda Pericula, & plurimum Conſilii inter ipſa Pericula*; he was bold in Attempting, and prudent in Managing, the moſt difficult Services. The former had ſignified little, without the latter. Courage may throw Men into the midſt of Difficulties; but Council and Wiſdom

viour of it. Not that the Individuals of a Nation are all upon an Equality, or that the Vices of the Poor will draw down the Vengance of Heaven, as ſoon as the ſame Vices of Perſons in a ſuperior Station

dom help them to wade thro' thoſe Difficulties; which cannot be rationally expected from Men that daily dethrone their Reaſon by Senſuality. Therefore the Security of any State muſt be abundantly provided for, when Men, not only ſober, juſt, and temperate, but religiouſly good, are employed in public Truſts and Service.

What a renowned, proſperous, and ſucceſsful Captain of the Armies of *Iſrael* was good *Joſhua!* "No Man was able to ſtand before him all the Days of his Life." But, what bred thoſe brave, gallant, and undaunted Spirits in the Breaſt of This Hero, and crowned his noble Deſigns with ſuch admirable Succeſs? - It was Religion that gave the Edge and Point to his natural Courage; (*Res regia Virtus.*) "This Book of the Law ſhall not depart out of thy Mouth; but thou ſhalt meditate thereon Day and Night, that thou mayeſt obſerve to do all that is written therein; for *then* thou ſhalt make thy Way proſperous, and *then* thou ſhalt have good Succeſs."

Hezekiah by this Means had not his Equal among the Kings of *Judah*. (*Agmen agit, magnique ipſe Agminis inſtar.*) "For he cleave to the Lord; and the Lord was with him, and he proſpered whitherſoever he went-forth." — And, dying *David*, from a whole Life of Experience, recommended This, as the only Method of Proſperity, unto *Solomon* his Son; "Keep the Charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in all his Ways, that thou mayeſt proſper in all that thou doſt, and whitherſoever thou turneſt thyſelf."

How great a Luſtre, therefore, doth this Truth caſt about it, that the Reſtraint and Reformation of Vice, and due Encouragement of Virtue and Piety, becomes the very Civil Intereſt of Kingdoms and Nations, by the Joint-Voice and Suffrages both of human and divine Wiſdom?

tion: - For, tho' the Vices be the ſame in the Catalogue of Sin, yet the Degree of Guilt muſt be eſtimated by the Extenſiveneſs of their ill Conſequences, and that in Proportion to the Circumſtances of the Knowledge, Rank, Character and Truſt of the Perſon who commits them. But yet,

As the Body Natural cannot be ſa'd to be ſound, if any One of its Members are out of Order; ſo the Perfection of the Body Politic conſiſts in the Perfection of all its Parts. And ſuch an happy political Conſtitution can never be obtained, unleſs by the united Efforts of all the different Degrees, Orders and Claſſes of the Members of which it conſiſts.

Indeed, If the "Head be ſick," or the "Heart faint," the whole Body muſt neceſſarily be diſorded; but however clear and compoſed the Head may be or however entire and regular, in its Motion, the Heart; yet if any of the inferior Members are in Pain, the Seat of Senſation is in the Head; and the Diſeaſe, unleſs timely prevented will communicate itſelf to the contiguous Members, and at laſt occaſion perhaps a Corruption of the whole. Prudence therefore

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therefore requires the Removal of the Cauſe in any of its Parts, and a right Application of the proper Means to it.

This Nation is at preſent bleſſed with a Sovereign, who, in his private Capacity, makes the Law of his God his Delight; and, in his publick Character, ſeems to place his temporal Ambition in the Welfare and Proſperity of his People. "Happy are the People that are in ſuch a Caſe;" at leaſt they have a fair Proſpect of Happineſs, which if they fail to obtain, it muſt be imputed to themſelves.

Far be it, here, from preſaging Evil to our Country, or ſaying that we are worſe than our Neighbours, or more degenerate than our Forefathers; - No; - but, - tho we do not ſay this, yet we cannot be complimented ſo far as to ſay, that we are as good as we ought to be, or that there is no Room for Amendment, or that our Succeſſes, at any Time vouchſafed us, have been the Conſequences of our Merit. To entertain ſuch Phariſaical Notions, would be a Contradiction to the Sentiments of every true Chriſtian, and to the ſolemn Appointment of every public Humiliation. Now,

As the private Welfare of every Individual is cloſely connected with that of the Publick; and as national Faſts are of a publick Nature in Order to procure

procure publick Bleſſings, it is the Duty of every Member of the Community to lay aſide all private Prejudices, and to yield a ready Obedience to the Commands at theſe Times, when the Publick-Good may be promoted by it.

It is not my Deſign to enlarge here upon the Utility of National-Faſting: - The Availableneſs of it, when properly performed, to avert the Judgements of God, and to procure his Bleſſing, no one can be ignorant of, that is at all acquainted with the Hiſtorical and Prophetical Books of the Old-Teſtament; - I ſhall, therefore, rather take it for granted; and only make this Inference, [viz] that according to the Solemnity and Devotion with which a National-Faſt is obſerved, the greater or leſs may the Availableneſs and Utility of ſuch a Faſt reaſonably be ſuppoſed.

What I chiefly deſign from theſe Words, is, to conſider What it is to keep a truly religious Faſt to God, and, what a ſolemn Humiliation and Repentance really require from us. — And here,

A truly religious Faſt conſiſts in theſe ſeveral Particulars;

Firſt, In the afflicting our Bodies, by a ſtrict Abſtinence, ſo as to make them proper Inſtruments to forward

forward and promote the real Grief and Trouble of our Minds.

Secondly, In an humble Confeſſion of our Sins to God, with Shame and Confuſion of Face, and an hearty Contrition and Sorrow for them.

Thirdly, In an earneſt Deprecation of God's Diſpleaſure, and humble Supplications to him, to avert his Judgments, and turn away his Anger from us. And,

Fourthly, In proſecuting our Repentance and good Reſolutions, to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. - Of theſe in their Order:

Firſt, Of afflicting our Bodies, by ſtrict Abſtinence, ſo as to make them proper Inſtruments to forward and promote the real Grief and Trouble of our Minds.

By Faſts we mean Days ſet-apart by the Church, or by Civil Authority, or by our own Appointment, to humble ourſelves before God in puniſhing our Bodies and afflicting our Souls, in Order to a real Repentance: - By outward Significations teſtifying our Grief for Sins paſt, and by uſing them as Means to ſecure us from returning to thoſe Sins, for which we expreſs ſo great Diſlike.

Tho

Tho it is certain, that in the Exerciſe of Repentance, the main thing required, is, to return from our evil Ways; yet it is plain in the Prophets, that This inward Grief was expreſſed by outward Signs of Faſting, and Weeping, and Mourning.

And that This was not peculiar to the Genius of the Old-Teſtament, appears by the Directions given by St. James concerning Repentance; [viz] "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your Laughter be turned into Mourning, and your Joy into Heavineſs." - Again, "Humble yourſelves in the Sight of God, and He ſhall lift you up."

Theſe Words, if examined by the Phraſes of the Old-Teſtament, (our beſt Guide in interpreting the New,) import outward Expreſſions of Grief and Sorrow uſed by devout Perſons in Token of hearty and ſincere Repentance.

The great Faſt on the Day of Expiation, was called a Day of "afflicting their Souls," (A) which conſiſted not only in Abſtinence from Food, but in putting on the Habit and Appearance of Mourners.

Indeed, Nature ſeems to ſuggeſt this Duty, as a proper Means to expreſs our Sorrow and Grief, and as a fit Method to diſpoſe our Minds towards the Conſideration of any thing that is ſerious.

All

(A) Lev. xvi. 29.

All Nations, therefore, from ancient Times, have uſed Faſting as a Part of Repentance, & as a Means to turn away God's Anger; as is plain from Jonah, in the Caſe of the Ninevites, which was a Notion common to them with the reſt of the World. (A)

And tho our Saviour hath left no poſitive Precept about Faſting, except in the Words before us, which are full of Directions concerning the Performance of it, and joins it with "Almſgiving" and "Prayer," unqueſtionable Duties, Theſe do ſufficiently ſuppoſe the Neceſſity of it: which, if governed by ſuch Rules as our Saviour preſcribes, will be accepted by God, and be openly rewarded by him. Beſides, our Saviour

(A) Faſting was a Duty all along obſerved by devout Men, and acceptable to God both under the Old and New Teſtament, as it was helpful to their Devotion, equally as it was a Part of it.

Publick-enjoined Faſts, upon extraordinary Occaſions, are ſo frequent in Scripture, that they need not to be here particularly mentioned. — And, as to private Faſts, we read that David "chaſtened his Soul with Faſting," & Daniel ſought the Lord, "not only with Prayer and Supplications, but with Faſting." Anna "ſerved the Lord, and worſhipped him in Prayers and Faſtings, Night and Day." Cornelius was Faſting as well as Praying, when the Viſion came, that "brought Salvation to his Houſe." When Paul and Barnabas were to be ordained Apoſtles, there was Faſting joined to Prayer; and St. Paul approved himſelf a Miniſter of God "in Faſtings," as well as in Labours and Watchings; "He kept his Body under, and brought it into Subjection; leſt, while he preached to others, he himſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away."

viour ſays expreſsly, that "the Time ſhould come when his Diſciples ſhould faſt;" — And when He brings in the Phariſee boaſting that "he faſted twice in the Week," our Saviour in no Way blames him for faſting, but only corrects his Vanity for boaſting of it.

We ought, therefore, to avoid all Vanity and valuing ourſelves upon ſuch Performances; and in our private Faſts, not to proclaim them to others, by any external Affectations, "that we appear not unto Men to faſt." — Above all things, we ſhould be careful, not to deſtroy the Health of our Bodies by over-much Severity herein, and thereby make them unfit Inſtruments for the Operations of our Minds, or the Diſcharge of our worldly Employments; particularly heeding that we do not grow moroſe and ſour, peeviſh and fretful towards others, which too much Severity to ourſelves may be apt to occaſion: for this is ſo far from expreſſing our Repentance, that it makes freſh Work for it by increaſing our Guilt. — But,

Secondly, Another particular Duty in the Times of a religious Faſt, is, an humble Confeſſion to God, firſt of our own Sins in particular, and then more generally for the Sins of others, with Shame and

Confuſion

Confuſion of Face, and an hearty Contrition and Sorrow for them. — And Firſt,

Solemn Humiliation & Repentance require from us that we ſhould humble ourſelves before God, every one for his own perſonal Sins, by which he hath provoked God, and thereby increaſed the publick Guilt. But this, it muſt be remembered, muſt not only be a general Confeſſion that we are Sinners; but particularly of our particular Sins to God, ſo far as upon Examination of our Conſciences, we can call them to Remembrance; eſpecially our moſt grievous Sins, which our Conſciences will not ſuffer us to forget. Theſe we muſt acknowledge particularly, with the ſeveral Aggravations of them, that ſo we may, in ſome Meaſure, proportion our Sorrow and Humiliation to the Nature and Degree of our Guilt. (A) This Solomon preſcribes as a true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper Effects of a publick Humiliation and Repentance: "If there be in the Land, (ſays he,) Famine, Peſtilence

(A) Confeſſion is either a general or a more particular Acknowledging our Sins before God: the former of which is a neceſſary Part of our publick Prayers, the latter is moſt proper in our private Prayers only. Not hereby that we can inform God of what He does not know, but in a true Senſe of our own Simplicity, Corruption, and Wretchedneſs, to humble ourſelves before the Throne of his Grace, & own ourſelves liable to what Puniſhment his Juſtice ſhall condemn us.

Peſtilence, Blaſting, Mildew, Locuſt, or Caterpillar; or, if an Enemy beſiege them in the Land of their Cities, what Plague or Sickneſs there be, what Prayer and Supplication ſoever be made by any Man, or by all the People Iſrael, who ſhall know every Man the Plague of his own Heart, and ſpread forth his Hands; then, hear Thou in Heaven, thy Dwelling-Place, and forgive, and do, and give to every Man according to his Way, whoſe Heart thou knoweſt; for Thou, even Thou only, knoweſt the Hearts of the Children of Men, that they may fear thee all the Days which they live in the Land which thou gaveſt to their Fathers." (A)

So that, in the Caſe of any publick Judgement or Calamity, the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation muſt begin with particular Perſons: (B) who ſhall know every Man the Plague of his own Heart; and

(A) *Sæpè Jovem vidi, cum jam ſua mittere vellet*
Fulmina, Thure dato, ſiſtiſſe Manum.
Flectitur iratus Voce rogante Deus.

(B) — *Exempta juvat Spinis e pluribus una.*

It is Folly to amuſe ourſelves with the vain Expectation of every other Perſon's Reformation, whilſt we ourſelves continue uncorrected and do not think what beneficial Effects would follow from our own Amendment; where Reformation ought always to begin.

See Matt. vii. 3. &c. and Luke vi. 41. &c.

and they muſt be convinced of their perſonal Sins and Tranſgreſſions, before God will hear their Prayers, and forgive them. But

Becauſe we cannot confeſs and bewail our Sins, & repeat them, in the Public Congregation, more than in GENERAL; it would therefore be proper, at theſe Times, to humble ourſelves before God, PRIVATELY, in our Cloſets, "unto our Father which is in ſecret, that He which ſeeth in ſecret, may reward us openly." — But further,

To this our Confeſſion, we muſt add a real Shame and Sorrow for Sins; for Confeſſion always ſuppoſes Conviction of a Fault; and, he that is truly convinced that he hath done amiſs, cannot but be aſhamed for what he hath done: "Shame, therefore, and Confuſion of Face" are neceſſary Concomitants of Confeſſion: - For, thus the Penitents in Scripture are repreſented. — But further,

Not only Shame, but Sorrow alſo muſt be taken into the Account: - "I will declare mine Iniquity, and be ſorry for my Sin." - And, this Sorrow muſt be in Proportion to the Degree of our Guilt; - If we have been very wicked, and have "multiplied our Tranſgreſſions;" - If we have neglected God, and "forgotten him Days without Number:" - If

"our

our Sins have been as Scarlet," (i.e) of a deeper Dye than ordinary; then muſt our Sorrow be deep alſo, and "Rivers of Tears would well become us."

But further; As we thus humble ourſelves for our own Sins, ſo we ſhould alſo, on a Faſt-day, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of Others; eſpecially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Degrees of Men, by which the Wrath and Indignation of Almighty God may be juſtly incenſed againſt us.

It hath been the Practice of good Men in all Ages to humble themſelves, to be troubled and afflicted, and to mourn in Secret for the Sins of others, as well as their own: "My ſoul, (ſays the Prophet Jeremiah,) ſhall weep in ſecret Places for your Pride; mine Eyes ſhall weep ſore, and run down with Tears, becauſe the Lord's Flock is carried away captive."

His Book of Lamentations is little otherwiſe but a perpetual Humiliation for the Sins of that People, & for the Judgment of God, which he ſaw inflicted, or coming upon them.

Holy David, alſo, upon all Occaſions, teſtifies his Trouble and Grief for the Sins of others: "I wept, and chaſtened my Soul with Faſting:" My Knees became weak through faſting:" "Rivers of Tears run down mine Eyes, becauſe Men keep not thy Laws:"

Laws:" - "I beheld the Tranſgreſſors, and was grieved, becauſe they kept not thy Word."

How does Daniel alſo humble himſelf before God, and mourn in the Name of all the People, for their great Sins! "We have ſinned, and have committed Iniquity, and have done wickedly; O Lord, Righteouſneſs belongeth unto Thee, but unto us Confuſion of Face, as at this Day, to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, becauſe we have ſinned againſt Thee."

With what Trouble & Confuſion does Ezra, on a ſolemn Day of Faſting, bewail the Sins of the People! "I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my Face to Thee, my God; for our Iniquities are increaſed over our Heads, and our Treſpaſſes are grown up to the Heavens: Since the Days of our Fathers we have been in a great Treſpaſs unto this Day." And,

Thus ought we, in Imitation, on any Day of Faſting and Humiliation, to ſet our Sins in Order before us, with all their Aggravations, and to lament and bewail that general Impiety and Vice, which overſpreads the Nation, through all Ranks and Degrees of Men. But,

Thirdly, Another Duty which we are to perform upon a Faſt-day is, earneſtly to deprecate God's Diſpleaſure, and make our humble Supplications to him,

him, that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to avert thoſe terrible Judgments which we may at any Time have juſt Cauſe to fear, and that his fierce Anger may be turned away from us.

This was what the People of God did on their Faſt-days: "Sanctify a Faſt, call a ſolemn Aſſembly, let the Prieſts, the Miniſters of the Lord, weep between the Porch & the Altar: & let them ſay, ſpare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to Reproach, that the Heathen ſhould rule over them. Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People."

Thus did Daniel humbly and earneſtly deprecate the Diſpleaſure of God towards his People, entreating him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them;

"O Lord, I beſeech thee, let thine Anger and thy Fury be turned away from thy City, Jeruſalem, thy holy Mountain; becauſe for our Sins, and for the Iniquities of our Fathers Jeruſalem and thy People are become a Reproach to all that are around us. O my God, incline thine Ear and hear: open thine Eyes and ſee, and behold our Deſolations, and the City that is called by thy Name. For we do not preſent our Supplications before thee, for our Righteouſneſs, but for thy great Mercy. O Lord hear, O Lord

"Lord forgive, - O Lord hearken, and do; defer not for thine own Sake, O my God." (A) And,

Thus alſo ſhould we, upon ſuch ſolemn Occaſions, cry mightily unto God; and, with the greateſt Importunity, deprecate thoſe terrible Judgments, to which the great and innumerable Sins of the Nation have moſt juſtly expoſed us: humbly beſeeching him, not for our Righteouſneſs, but for his own infinite Mercy, for his Name's Sake, and becauſe we are his People, and his holy Truth and Religion is profeſſed among us, that he would be pleaſed to hear our Prayers and Supplications, which we make before him, for the Lord's Sake. (B)

Laſtly, We ſhould proſecute our Repentance and good Reſolutions, till we have actually reformed and amended our Lives; for in this, Repentance chiefly conſiſts: - This is the End of Confeſſion, and of all Sorrow and Humiliation for our Sins, without which we

(A) See the whole of this excellent Prayer, and the Succeſs of it, Dan. ix. 3. &c.

(B) Faſting, or mere abſtaining from certain Food, unleſs it be ſanctified by Prayer, is at beſt but a ſuperſtitious Kind of Penance, & can no more be called a religious Act of Humiliation, than merely outward Expreſſions of Joy, can be called religious Acts of Thankſgiving. The outward Ordinances of Religion, the mere *Opera operata*, are but formal Complyances, unleſs ſanctified and enliven by a religious Attention, and ſpiritual Application.

we do but mock God, and deceive ourſelves.

True Confeſſion of our Sins with Shame and Sorrow for them is utterly inconſiſtent with any Thoughts of returning to them.

Whenever, therefore, we make Confeſſion of our Sins to God - "It is furely meet to ſay to him I will not offend any more, that which I know not, teach Thou me; and, if I have done Iniquity, I will do ſo no more." Accordingly the Wiſe-Man pronounceth that "He that covereth his Sins ſhall not proſper, (A) but who confeſſeth, and forſaketh them ſhall have Mercy." - The penitent Acknowledgement of our Sins to God, with Shame and Sorrow for them, with full Purpoſe and Reſolution to leave them, are but preparatory to our actual forſaking them. - That which perfects and completes the whole, is, to turn from our evil Way, and to break-off our Sins by Repentance, (i.e) by real Reformation and Amendment; - The Whole being to eſtabliſh in us better Obedience, and a more conſcientious Care of our Lives and Actions for the future.

By this Means only it is, that the great End of a ſolemn Faſt and Humiliation can be attained - for otherwiſe, without theſe Particulars, the whole will be

(A) *Qui Vitia ſua celant, nec admonentem patiuntur, de his nulla Salutis Spes.*

be loſt in a confuſed general Repentance, which commonly ends with the public Aſſembly, without any real permanent Effect upon particular Perſons, who return with the ſame Affection for their Sins as before, and a ſecret Reſolution not to forſake them.

Thus it was with the Jews of Old; they had their fixt ſolemn Faſts, in which they made a great Shew of Humiliation, "by being of a ſad Countenance, by hanging down their Heads and ſpreading Sackcloth and Aſhes, thus appearing unto Men to faſt;" but, there was no inward Change of their Minds, nor real Reformation of their Lives; but, as ſoon as the public Aſſembly was over, they turned every one to his former evil Courſe: Though they humbled themſelves before God, and repented of the National Sins in GENERAL, yet, they never conſider'd, they had no Senſe of their own Sins in PARTICULAR; without which there can be no true general Repentance: "I heard, (ſays God,) but they ſpake not aright; no Man repented him of his Wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done; but they turned every one to his own Courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battle," without any Conſideration or Senſe of Danger.

As we are all Sinners, therefore, and liable to the Juſtice

Juſtice of God, Confeſſion, with Repentance and Amendment, are Matters of high Moment wherein to be rightly informed, and much converſant. - The beſt of us have many Sins to confeſs and forſake, and ſome of us, perhaps, may have need to change the whole Courſe of our Lives in Order to a Capacity of Forgiveneſs.

And, to perſuade us hereto, let us conſider the Reaſonableneſs of the thing itſelf, - the expreſs Command of God for it, (A) together with the great Benefit and Advantage of it, and, (which is beyond all other Arguments,) the abſolute Neceſſity of it to make us capable of Mercy, and Forgiveneſs from God - For, without This, there can be no Repentance.

Under the Law, it was not the Obſervance of Days or Months, of New Moons or Sabbaths: - It was not the "making broad the Philacteries" - the "making many and long Prayers" - "making a fair Shew in the Fleſh, with the offering of thouſands of Rams, and ten thouſands of Rivers of Oil," that were ſo acceptable to God, as to "relieve the Oppreſſed" - "to judge the Fatherleſs," and "to plead for the Widow." - In Vain did a Man "faſt and afflict his Soul;" - in Vain did he bow down his Head

as

(A) 1 John i. 8, 9, 10.

as a Bulruſh, and ſpread Sack-cloth and Aſhes under him;" - in Vain did he come before the Lord, and bow himſelf before the moſt high God:" All this pompous Sacrifice, rigid Humiliation, and preciſe Obſervances of Ceremonies, were not only unacceptable, but declared abominable, in the Sight of Heaven, without the Religion of the Heart, and Reformation of our Lives.

The proper Fruit and Effect of all our Humiliation and good Reſolutions being to forſake our Sins and to become better for the future. God, by his Prophet, ſeverely expoſtulates with his People, the Jews, for their Defect in this: - "When ye faſted and mourned, in the fifth and ſeventh Month, even theſe forty Years, did ye at all faſt unto Me, even unto Me?" (i.e) did theſe Faſts truly ſerve to any religious End and Purpoſe? Nay, rather, did not the People content themſelves with a mere external Shew and Performance, without any inward Affliction, or Humiliation for their Sins, towards a real Repentance? Did they not "faſt for Striſe and Debate, and to ſmite with the Fiſt of Wickedneſs?" "Ye ſhall not faſt as ye do This Day, to make your Voice to be heard on high. - Is it ſuch a Faſt as I have choſen? A Day for a Man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow-down his Head as a Bull-ruſh, to ſpread

Sack-

"Sack-cloth and Aſhes under him? (A) Wilt thou call this a Faſt, and an acceptable Day to the Lord? — Is not This the Faſt that I have choſen, - To loſe the Bands of Wickedneſs, - to undo the heavy Burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every Yoke? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor that are caſt out to thine Houſe; - When thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own Fleſh? Then ſhall thy Light break-forth as the Morning, and thy Salvation as the Noon-day; thy Righteouſneſs and thine Alms ſhall go before thee, and the Glory of the Lord ſhall be thy Rear-ward: Then ſhalt thou call

and

(A) Rigid Penances and Pilgrimages, to expiate Sin, without real Reformation and Amendment, are of no Avail.

"He that thinks to expiate a Sin by going bare-footed, does "the Penance of a Gooſe, and only makes one Folly the Atonement "for another. For Men to think that a Man cannot be a Penitent, "unleſs a Vagabond, by Pilgrimaging about the World, is to make "Cain's Curſe their Religion.

"We read that St. Paul was beaten by the Jews, but never that "he beat himſelf; If Men think his *keeping under the Body*, imports "ſo much, they muſt firſt prove that the Body cannot be kept under "by a virtuous Mind, and that the Mind cannot be made virtuous "without a Scourge. The Truth is, if Men's Religion be no deeper "than the Skin, it is poſſible they may ſcourge themſelves into great "Improvements; but let them laſh on never ſo faſt, they may as well "expect to bring a Cart, as a Soul to Heaven, by theſe Means."

Palmer's Aphoriſms

"and I will anſwer thee; thou ſhalt cry, & He ſhall ſay, Here I am."

From all which Paſſages we may eaſily underſtand wherein theſe Faſts of the Jews were defective; - The Fault in general which God finds with them, was, that theſe Solemnities did not ſerve to any real End or Purpoſe of Religion, but failed in their main Deſign, which was, a ſincere Repentance and Reformation of our Lives; without which all our moſt earneſt Prayers and Supplications will ſignify nothing, to ſave either our Souls, or this untoward Generation. "If my People, (ſays God,) ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my Face, and turn from their wicked Ways; THEN will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their Sin, and heal their Land:"

But, If we will not hearken and obey, can we expect God to ſave us, only that we may ſin without Fear the Remainder of our Days? What Reaſon is there for God to preſerve our Religion to us, when we will not ſuffer it to direct and govern our Lives?

"Be thou inſtructed, therefore, O Jeruſalem, (ſaith God,) leſt my Soul depart from thee; leſt I make thee deſolate, a Land not inhabited."

Concerning the wicked God hath expreſsly ſaid, that "when they faſt he will not hear their Cry."

"Therefore

"Therefore, alſo now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your Heart, and with Faſting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning: And rend your Heart, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: For he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs, and repenteth him of the Evil. Who knoweth, if he will return and repent, and leave a Bleſſing behind him; even a Meat-offering and a Drink-offering unto the Lord our God?" Upon the Whole,

A Faſt may be counted religious when it is undertaken upon religious Ends and Purpoſes, to reſtrain the looſer Appetites of the Fleſh, and to keep the Body under, and in due Subjection: - To give the Mind Liberty & Ability to conſider and reflect while it is actually engaged in divine Service, and preparing for the ſolemn Parts of it: - To humble ourſelves before God under a Senſe of our Sins, and the Miſery to which they expoſe us: - To deprecate his Anger, and to ſupplicate for his Mercy and Favour: - To expreſs Revenge againſt ourſelves for the ſinful Exceſſes and Sins we have committed; and, above all, when it is uſed as a Means and Help for Improvement in Grace, and Reformation of our Manners, & ſhould, therefore, be obſerved, not only by interrupting and abidrging the Care of our bodily

dily Suſtenance, but by carefully enquiring into the the State of our Souls, charging ourſelves with all thoſe Tranſgreſſions which we have committed, and Duties which we have omitted to do, humbly confeſſing them with Shame and Confuſion of Face, with hearty Sorrow and Contrition for them, in full Purpoſe of Amendment to our utmoſt Ability; Then ſhall our Faſts be neither a Mocking of God, nor a deceiving of ourſelves: Then ſhall we "faſt not as the Hypocrites," in Appearance only, but as real Penitents, as real Worſhippers of God, in Sincerity and Truth; "and God, which ſeeth in Secret," theſe things in us, "will reward us openly;" - "will be jealous for his Land, and pity his People."

To Conclude, — It is much more agreeable to praiſe, than to reprove; but, it muſt not be diſſembled, that the Behaviour of too many, at theſe Times, is frequently ſo careleſs & irreverent, as ill becomes thoſe who pretend thus to humble themſelves before God for their Offences: One ſerious Thought of which would excite us to more Reverence, and to exceeding Compoſure.

Could we be prevailed upon to demean ourſelves with that Reverence, - and to hear with that Attention which in this Caſe more eſpecially becomes us, it might then be hoped we ſhould conſider what is

ſaid:

ſaid: - Conſideration would probably work Conviction, which might produce in us a firm Reſolution to perform what we are inwardly convinced is both our Duty and Intereſt to do.

Let us, then, obſerve our Days of Faſting with full Purpoſes of doing our Duty, and not be content with "Offering the Sacrifice of Fools" as the Hypocrites, who act only for Appearance, - "who only appear to Men to faſt," and conſequently have their Reward for ſo doing in the Praiſe and Approbation of Men, and muſt not therefore look for any thing from God, before whom it was not obſerved, before whom they did it not.

Let us then truly and ſincerely repent of our paſt Sins, and be more conſtant Obſervers of our Duty for the Time to come: Let us fear that great and terrible God whom we have offended: Let us humble ourſelves for our Sins, and turn to him with full Purpoſe of Amendment, leſt we provoke him to puniſh us yet ſeven Times more for our Iniquities: Let us with penitent Job, ſay unto God, "I have born Chaſtiſement; I will not offend any more; that which I ſee not, teach thou me; and if I have done Iniquity, I will do ſo no more." - "O that there was ſuch an Heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our Children for ever."

Sermon

SERMON II.

The frequent Unavailableneſs of Faſts, conſidered.

Iſaiah lviii. 3. "Wherefore have we faſted, (ſay "they) and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we af- "flicted our Soul, and thou takeſt no Knowledge?"

Scarce any thing appeared more early, or has all along been more diſtinguiſhable in the Nature of fallen Man, than a certain Reluctance, which he diſcovers upon almoſt every Occaſion of Diſappointment or Uneaſineſs, againſt acknowledging, or even ſuſpecting the Cauſe to be within himſelf. Nor,

Is this obſervable, only in SINGLE Perſons, but oftentimes in Parties, and ſometimes in WHOLE Communities of Men.

In the Glory of any Publick-Succeſs they can be readily contented to take their Share: But,

When Affairs are leſs proſperous, we find them equally diſpoſed to renounce all Pretenſions to the Blame - little ſollicitous where That reſt, provided it be not brought-home to themſelves.

The

The Paſſage before us will, (I think,) furniſh us with a remarkable Inſtance of what is here obſerved.

From ſeveral Parts of this ſublime Prophecy it appears that the Jewiſh People were at this Time chargeable with many groſs Deviations from the Law of God, (verſe 1ſt.) - Tho' at the ſame Time, it ſeems as if their Behaviour had been in every Reſpect irreproachable, and they were aſſiduous Performers of all outward Devotion; - "They ſeek me daily, (ſaith God,) " and delight to know my Ways, as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs and forſook not the Ordinances of God." Indeed,

So inſenſible were they of their own Degeneracy and ſo little acquainted with the Perfections of God, as to be at a Loſs to account for the Unſucceſsfulneſs of their former Addreſſes, and almoſt ready to aſcribe it to a Want of either Power or Goodneſs in the Deity.

"Wherefore have we faſted, (ſay they,) and Thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our Soul, & Thou takeſt no Knowledge?"

Strange! - that a "ſinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, - a Seed of Evil-Doers, - Children that were Corrupters," ſhould want an Anſwer to this Queſtion! (A)

(A) *Rari quippè Boni.* Let

Let us however ſuſpend our Admiration till we have reflected a little, whither we ourſelves, may not, in ſome Degree, (upon the Continuance of God's Judgements at any Time upon us, after Faſtings for, and Deprecations of them,) be concerned in this Obſervation.

The preſenting ourſelves before God, deprecating his Judgments, of which we may, at any time, be juſtly afraid, and imploring his Bleſſing on the Councels and Arms of our Sovereign, (in Conformity with the pious Injunction of our Superiors, and with the Practice of the Church of God in all Ages,) is undoubtedly both reaſonable, pious, and godly.

Of what Efficacy this, at any Time, is, becomes us not to pronounce. But,

As God, for wiſe Reaſons, doth not always immediately anſwer the Requeſts of his Supplicants, nor their Faſtings procure for them all thoſe favourable Returns from Heaven, which they deſired and hoped for from them - It becomes us to ſee what Uſe we are to make of this.

In Juſtice to our Governours, indeed, it ſhould be remembered, that they do, at all Times, in every Appointment of this Nature, ſuggeſt the Conſideration which ought always to be uppermoſt in our Thoughts on this Subject. But, Is

Is this, in Fact, the View wherein we are moſt apt to conſider theſe things?

A little Conſideration with Men, wiſe in their own Eyes, & full of political Schemes, will convince us of the contrary:- With many of theſe, we ſhall hear much of the Perfidiouſneſs of our Neighbouring-Powers; and the Inactivity and unreaſonable Delays of others; Indeed, of our ownſelves alſo; and of the Encouragement given to our Enemies ABROAD, by our unreaſonable Parties and Factions at HOME.

With Others, we ſhall find our Misfortunes firſt greatly aggravated, and then aſcribed entirely to the Miſmanagement of Publick-Affairs, and to the Weakneſs or Wickedneſs of Perſons intruſted with the Direction of them: (A) And,

As to PARTICULAR Enterprizes, when Men have charged the Failure of our ſanguine Expectations to the too-eager Impetuoſity, perhaps, of one Leader, or to the Inactivity and Unfaithfulneſs of others; and to the Want of due Harmony between the Principal Conductors of them all, they think they have given a full Solution of the reſpective Caſes, and trouble not themſelves with looking any farther: thus widely differing in the particular Accounts; but All

(A) When great Enterprizes fail, the common People blame the Government; which can no more be without Errors and Miſcarrages than the meaneſt Subject.

All agreeing to clear themſelves of any Share in the Blame: and Moſt (I fear,) ſo far varying from the Pattern in the Text, as to leave God and Providence quite out of their Calculations. Whereas,

It is He "who ruleth over all" - "Thro' him it is that both the Chariot and Horſe are fallen." - "He bringeth down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalteth the humble and meek" - "He turneth the World upſide-down, and maketh his Judgments to be known in the Earth" - "He ſtilleth the Raging of the Sea, the Noiſe of his Waves, and the Madneſs of the People" - "He turneth wiſe Men backward, and maketh their Knowledge fooliſh" - "He turneth the Floods into a Wilderneſs, and drieth up the Water-ſprings - A fruitful Land maketh he barren, for the Wickedneſs of them that dwell therein - again, He maketh the Wilderneſs a ſtanding Water, and Water-ſprings of a dry Ground; and there he ſetteth the hungry, that they may build them a City to dwell in, - that they may ſow their Land & plant Vineyards to yield them Fruits of Increaſe - He bleſſeth them, ſo that they multiply exceedingly; and ſuffereth not their Cattle to decreaſe; - and again, when they are miniſhed and brought low, thro' Oppreſſion, thro' any Plague or Trouble; tho' He ſuffer them to be evil-intreated thro' Tyrants, and let them wander out of the Way in the Wilderneſs; yet

helpeth He the Poor out of Miſery, and maketh him Houſholds, like a Flock of Sheep."

"The Righteous will conſider This, and rejoice, and the Mouth of all Wickedneſs ſhall be ſtopped."

In reſting, therefore, theſe Matters where we commonly do, our Inquiries END, where they ought only TO BEGIN.

Be the Faults on all Sides, therefore, ſuppoſed as great, at any Time, as even Party-vehemence can repreſent them; - yet the Reflections, in which we are moſt nearly intereſted, remain ſtill to be made, [viz] that we conſider God, the PERMITTER, if not the DIRECTOR, of all theſe things; and to whom, therefore, we muſt always refer the Effects they produce, and then attentively conſider what Inſtruction He intends to convey to us by them. (A)

If to our other Preparations, at any Time, againſt the Dangers of our Country, we may have added ſolemn Addreſſes to the Almighty, we may well aſk ourſelves, in the Language of the Text, (not by Way of familiar Expoſtulation with our Maker, but of impartial Examination of our own Conſciences,) "Wherefore have we faſted, and God ſeeth not? Wherefore have we afflicted our Soul, & He taketh no Knowledge?" This

(A) *Diſcite Juſtitiam moniti, et non temnite Divos.*

This is the Uſe I ſhall make of the Words before us. The Grounds of God's Proceedings, tho' in all Caſes juſt and right in themſelves, yet may in many things be out of the Reach of our Diſcernment: - and whenſoever they are ſo, they afford Matter of implicit Acquieſcence, rather than curious Examination, or bold Conjecture. The Truth is,

From the preſent viſible Diſpenſations of Providence towards Individuals or even Communities, we cannot always form unerring Judgments concerning their real Situation, in Reſpect to the Favour of Heaven. - However, We ſeldom find Evil brought upon any Perſons, or even Good with-held from them, in their National Capacity, but for ſome Cauſe, or other, ſubſiſting on THEIR Part. And when the Lord's Hand is thus lifted up, He expects that a Nation ſhould ſee and conſider it. But,

When the Reaſons of God's Proceedings may with Probability be collected from any Circumſtances of the Community concerned, it will always be the Duty of ſuch a Community to inquire into, and attentively weigh and conſider them. And here,

Not to enumerate the Variety of Cauſes which may be ſuppoſed to hinder worldly Succeſs, from the Want of Skill and Miſmanagement in the Conduct

duct of Affairs; - from a too-much Reliance on the Aſſiſtance of God when we have the Means in our Power; - Or, contrarywiſe, a too-much Reliance on our own Strength, ſeparate from the divine Aſſiſtance; - all, or any of which, may be ſufficient for God to blaſt our wiſhed-for Succeſs. But,

Not to enlarge on any of Theſe, it may be moſt proper ſingly to inſiſt on That particular Defect, principally inſiſted on by the Prophet in the Context, as, at all Times, too generally prevailing among us, [viz] "The Want of proper Qualification, and Humiliation of Ourſelves."

If we compare this Paſſage with others on the ſame Subject, we may collect the three following principal Requiſites of a National Faſt, [viz.]

An unfeigned Humiliation both of Body and Mind, in Oppoſition to any hypocritical Performance of this Duty — 2dly An humble Application for, and ſincere Reliance upon, the divine Bleſſing on the Uſe of proper Means. — And laſtly, an humane Temper of Mind towards all, but particularly a Readineſs to redreſs the aggrieved, and relieve the diſtreſſed.

I need not enlarge on theſe Particulars — If Self-Indulgence and Hypocriſy — If Preſumption and Confidence

Confidence in our own Strength — If rigorous Exactions upon the Defenceleſs, & Want of Bowels for the miſerable, prevail among us, — If theſe things can be more unſeaſonable at one Time than another, THAT Time muſt be, when we profeſs to humble ourſelves in Duſt and Aſhes, implōring Pardon for paſt Sins, & Protection againſt impending Dangers.

A Faſt, therefore, attended with all, or any of theſe aggravating Circumſtances, can never be "the Faſt which God hath choſen;" - nor ſhould any People, thus only "afflicting their Souls," be at a loſs to anſwer "wherefore He taketh no Knowledge."

Eſpecially, If, in the laſt Place, their former Humiliations have alſo failed of producing a proper Reformation of paſt Tranſgreſſions; (A) For ſurely, The

(A) When the *Athenians*, in War with the *Lecedæmonians*, received many Defeats both by Sea and Land, They ſent a Meſſage to the Oracle of *Jupiter-Ammon*, to aſk the Reaſon why They, who erected ſo many Temples to the Gods, and adorned them with ſuch coſtly Offerings; - why They, who had inſtituted ſo many Feſtivals, and accompanied them with ſuch Pomp and Ceremonies; in ſhort, why They, who had ſlain ſo many Heccatombs at their Altars, ſhould be leſs ſucceſful than the *Lacedemonians*, who fell ſo ſhort of them in all theſe Particulars? — The Oracle made the following Reply.

"I am better pleaſed with the PRAYERS of the *Lacedemonians*, "than with all the OBLATIONS of the *Greeks*." As it implied and encouraged Virtue in thoſe who made it: Whereas the moſt vicious Man may be devout, ſo far as Victims can make him, and his Oblati-

ons

The moſt ſolemn Addreſſes to the Majeſty of Heaven can make no Difference in Favour of an impenitent People, but rather the contrary — It being a Truth moſt agreeable to the cleareſt of our Natural Notions, that "GOD HEARETH NOT SINNERS" — Indeed, that "the Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to him."

If therefore, at any Time, the Bleſſings which Nations have been earneſtly requeſting, are "turn'd away, and good Things with-held from them," they may, in general, by This be admoniſhed that ſuch Delays are to be charged, not in any Failure on God's Part, but to ſomething amiſs on their own.

"Behold, (ſaith the Lord,) my Hand is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave, nor mine Ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your Iniquities have ſeparated between me and you; and your Sins have hid my Face from you, that I will not hear."

This is a Declaration ſo expreſs, as to want no Comment; but at the ſame Time, of ſuch Moment, as cannot be conſidered with too-much Attention, or with too-much Impartiality applyed by thoſe

ons ſtill be regarded by God, as Bribes; and his Petitions, as Blaſphemies. - "Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken," ſo as to do the Will of God, "better than the Fat of Rams."

thoſe who have before repeatedly implored the divine Aid and Protection.

Fain would I perſuade myſelf, that we are, at all Times, competently clear with regard to the Nature and Circumſtances of our Faſtings — That the inward Serioufneſs, Devotion, and Self-Abaſement of our Humiliations are, in ſome good Degree, anſwerable to the becoming Decency and Solemnity required. But alaſs!

There yet remains another Head of National Self-Examination! - And unleſs we ſhall alſo appear to "have broke-off our Sins by Repentance," we muſt not wonder if they remain ſtill unexpiated.

Let us then, with all Impartiality aſk ourſelves, (in Purſuance of any appointed Solemnity, eſpecially if reiterated upon us,) Let us aſk ourſelves, how far our former Faſts have been attended by a ſuitable Reformation in the Inſtances complained of? - And particularly, what Improvement we have made in the Practice of RELIGIOUS, PERSONAL, SOCIAL Duties, in the Courſe of our former Humiliations?

It were eaſy to aſk, (I would it were equally agreeable to anſwer,) Queſtions with Regard to the viſible State of Religion and Morals among us.

And yet, Theſe are THEY, which muſt conſtitute our real Character before God, either for our Acceptance, or Rejection. — Indeed, Over

Over and beſides theſe, there are particular perſonal Sins, thoſe "Plagues of our own Hearts," as ſtill farther Matter of very important Inquiry - which we are ſeverally called upon to ſearch into, and deplore, eſpecially, when in our Faſts, and Repetitions of them, we "ſpread-forth our Hands in the Houſe of God."

Theſe, when fairly brought to Account, and added to our many National Tranſgreſſions, may too juſtly fill us with "Shame and Confuſion of Face;" and make us, inſtead of expoſtulating with God for the little Notice He may have taken of any FORMER Humiliations, to cry out in the penſive Style of the lamenting Prophet," It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not conſumed, and becauſe his Compaſſions fail not!" — Happy for us that "his Compaſſions do not fail."

Let us then, upon the Encouragement ariſing from this Reflection, enquire what remains to be done on OUR Part, in Order more ſucceſsfully to recommend ourſelves to the divine Favour and Acceptance for the future. And, after what hath been ſaid, it may be proper to obſerve in the,

Firſt place, that the ſeeming Unſucceſsfulneſs of any former Humiliations muſt, by no Means, diſcourage us from continuing the ſame earneſt Applications

plications to the God of Heaven; which, tho' of themselves insufficient, will however be always necessary to engage his Protection and Favour.

We are commanded "ALWAYS to pray, and not to faint."

As there is no Perfection, in the Exercise & Display of which, God has thought fit to express a greater Delight than that of Mercy and Loving-kindness; so there is scarce any Provocation, of which he has, in stronger Terms, expressed his Resentment, than that of a desponding, or prophane Distrust of this his glorious Attribute.

When God threatned Evil to his People, and advised them to "turn every one from his evil ways," the perverse Use they made of so gracious a Warning, was, "They said there is no Hope; but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imaginations of his evil Heart."

Far be it from us to draw any such Inferences from God's Threatnings, or from the little Knowledge he may at any Time seem to take of our Addresses to him.

Let us remember his severe Expostulation with his own People by the Prophet MALACHI, "Your Words have been stout against me, saith the Lord of Host." — But,

What

What had they ſopken ſo much againſt him? — The Anſwer we have in the next Verſe — "They had ſaid, it is in Vain to ſerve God, and what Profit is it, that we have kept his Ordinances, and walked mournfully before him?"

We ſee the Almighty expects, (as moſt juſtly He may,) that Nations, as well as particular Perſons, ſhould "wait his Time" for the Grant of their Petitions, and is not leſs diſpleaſed with their Diſtruſt of his Goodneſs and Power, than with their Confidence in their own.

Our Bleſſed Lord hath taught us Chriſtians, both from his own Practice, and by his Inſtructions, to hope for thoſe gracious Anſwers to our reitterated Requeſts, which are not granted to our firſt Addreſſes for them. (A) Now,

What are we to collect from all this? But that "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"

Not that a Being of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs has Occaſion to be reminded of our Wants, or takes Delight in keeping us in Suſpenſe, or that He is capable of being wearied into Compaſſion by our Importunity and "much ſpeaking;" but only that He hath wiſe and gracious Ends to ſerve by this Method of proceeding.

(A) See Luke xi. 1 - - 14.

Perhaps,

Perhaps, to abate the Pride, and mortify the Self-ſufficiency of vain Men.

Perhaps, to exerciſe their Truſt and Faith in his Goodneſs, and to cheriſh in them a juſt Senſe of their entire Dependance on his Providence.

Perhaps, to render his Bleſſings, (when he ſhall at length think-fit to grant them,) more juſtly valued, more thankfully received, - and diſcreetly enjoyed by them.

If our Humiliation, at any Time, tho' after repeated Faſtings, be performed by us with a ſuitable Devotion and Fervency; with a due Degree of Lowlineſs of Mind and Dependance upon God; with undiſſembled Love to each other, & charitable Relief to our needy Brethren - in Concurrence with our own utmoſt Endeavours; who can tell whether God may not be even "waiting that He might be gracious unto us?" — whether He may not be giving Directions to the Miniſters of his Pleaſure, to "turn our Heavineſs into Joy, to put-off our Sack-Cloth, and gird us with Gladneſs." — However,

To render our Hopes of this Kind, in any Degree reaſonable, our Faſtings muſt be accompanied by a ſincere Abhorrence of our paſt Tranſgreſſions, and ſucceeded by an entire "turning-away" from them for the future. — Be this, then, our next Care, becauſe,

cauſe, without This, "our Oblations will be in vain, and our Incenſe an Abomination; indeed, our calling of Aſſemblies will itſelf be Iniquity, even our ſolemn Meeting."

What thoſe Provocations may be, which, we of THIS Land, may at any Time be particularly called upon to lament and forſake, cannot well be previouſly pointed out and ſpecified, as Vices in general vary with the Generations of Mankind. — But,

Be they what they will, it concerns us all to remember, that NATIONAL Reformation muſt firſt begin with PERSONAL Amendment. (A)

Let none of us, then, ſo mourn for the many crying Sins of the Nation, as to forget how much may have been contributed to the general Load by the Guilt of his own Sins. — Let our Zeal firſt exert itſelf in an impartial Scrutiny here; and when by an unfeigned Sorrow, and humble Applications to the God of Mercy, we have ſet all things right with ourſelves, it will then highly become us to endeavour at a more extenſive Good; and in Proportion to the Power of our Station, and the Extent of our Influence, to aſſiſt in promoting the Amendment and general Reformation of Mankind around us.

To

(A) See Page 19.

To Conclude, — We ſhould all of us, with that Seriouſneſs, which theſe Occaſions call for, "ſearch and try our Ways, and turn to the Lord" — We ſhould every one of us, before we depart from our devout Exerciſe on theſe Occaſions, reſolve to "caſt away all our Tranſgreſſions, whereby we have tranſgreſſed;" and, in Proportion to our Influence, and the Opportunities we have, help forward the Reformation of others. — And,

As the moſt effectual Encouragement to this great Work, we ſhould, (according to the Prophet's emphatical Advice in the like Exigency,) "ſanctify the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be our Fear, and let him be our Dread!" — So ſhall this Fear of the Lord baniſh from our Breaſts all other vain Fears; and we ſhall take the beſt Method in our Power for averting his Judgments from our Country, and for recommending to his Bleſſing, all our Undertakings.

But, however Providence may think fit to diſpoſe of the Affairs of the World; we ſhall in all Events, by this Means, ſecure to ourſelves "That Loving-Kindneſs of his, which is better than the Life itſelf."

And then, — Tho' we ſhould "hear of Wars, & Rumours of Wars," or "the Earth be moved either in the remoteſt, or neareſt Borders thereof," we ſhall have the leſs Need to be terrified: For, "whoſo dwelleth

dwelleth under the Defence of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty; who will deliver us from the Snare of the Hunter, and from the noiſom Peſtilence: - who will defend us under his Wings, and we ſhall be ſafe under his Feathers: his Faithfulneſs & Truth will be our Shield & Buckler; we ſhall not be afraid for any Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day: for the Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs: nor for the Sickneſs that deſtroyeth in the Noon-Day." - "In our Patience we may poſſeſs our Souls:" humbly relying on his gracious Promiſe, that when, "yet once more, God will not only ſhake this Earth, but Heaven alſo:" when the Commotions of States and Kingdoms ſhall all be ſwallowed-up in one great Convulſion of an expiring World, "we ſhall receive a Kingdom which cannot be moved, whoſe Maker and Builder is God, reſerved in Heaven for us," if we have been found, (by the Aſſiſtance of his Grace,) to have ſerved him acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear, in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs all the Days of our Life.

SERMON III.

On Publick-Spirit, Or the Love of our Country.

Nehemiah v. 19. "Think upon me, my God, "for Good, according to all that I have done "for this People."

As the general Deſign and End of Faſts, (according to their Divine Inſtitution,) being for the averting of Judgments, and for the Benefit of the Country at large; it may not, perhaps, be improper to ſubjoin to the foregoing, the great Duty of PUBLICK-SPIRITEDNESS, or Love of our Country in general - as without our own Exertion, neither Prayers nor Faſtings will be of any Avail; but rather a mocking of God, and deceiving of Ourſelves.

And here, — As Virtues are better taught, and more ſtrongly enforced by Example, than by Precept, we ſhall therefore ſo enforce it. We

We have, in the Perſon of NEHEMIAH, an Inſtance of Publick-Spirit which may be ſet againſt any thing that Hiſtory can produce, and will not ſuffer by the Compariſon: — Nor can GREECE, or ROME boaſt an Heroe, ſuperior to him in this great and good Quality. — I ſhall,

Firſt, conſider the Hiſtory a little; and then,

Secondly, ground on it, as from other Scripture, the great Duty before us;

Concluding with ſuch Motives & Conſiderations as may more ſtrongly confirm it upon us. And,

Firſt, NEHEMIAH was a Jew born probably at SHUSHAN, (the Court of the King of PERSIA:) where getting a good Settlement, He would not embrace the Opportunity of going to JUDEA, when the Jews had obtained Leave to return from the Captivity; which doubtleſs muſt have been the Caſe of many beſides himſelf, who either on Account of Age and Infirmity, or of their Poſſeſſions and Occupations, or of their Neighbours, Friends & Relations, choſe to remain where they had ſo long dwelt, and where they were in a Manner naturalized; and conſequently had never ſeen JERUSALEM, which was not the Place of his Birth; but his Anceſtors had dwelt there, and there they were buried. He

He enjoyed a conſiderable Poſt under the Perſian King, and was highly in Favour with that Prince, and very rich, and conſequently, as to this World, had all that he could hope or wiſh for.

It was, therefore, ſcarcely to be expected that One, in THIS Situation, would have beſtowed a Thought upon his remote and deſolate Country.

If, at That Diſtance, he had ſent a generous Relief to his Brethren in JUDEA, and performed ſuch kind Offices towards them as he conveniently could, This would have been a friendly and liberal Behaviour; BUT, he propoſed to himſelf to do much more. For,

When ſome, who came from Jeruſalem, told him of the bad State of that City, and how the Inhabitants were expoſed to the Inſults of their Enemies - He was greatly afflicted, and applied himſelf to FASTING, and earneſt Supplications to God, that He would look favourably upon his People.

Not contented barely with This, he applied for Aſſiſtance to the King, who granted him his Requeſt, and ſent him to Judea with Powers to repair every Defect and Oppreſſion, which he executed boldly, ſpeedily, and effectually.

The Neighbouring Nations did all they could to oppoſe it: — Upon this, NEHEMIAH did not only with the People, commit their Cauſe to Heaven with

with Prayers & Supplications; - but, (like a pious & brave Man,) He exhorted them to join with him in Supplication to God, and at the ſame Time to put themſelves in a Poſture of Defence.

But his own Words will beſt expreſs it. — "We made, (ſays He,) our Prayer to God, and I ſet the People with their Swords, their Spears, and their Bows; - and I ſaid unto them, be not afraid of them, Remember the Lord who is great and terrible, and fight for your Brethren, your Sons and your Daughters, your Wives and your Houſes." And,

Beſides this, He found the People in a deplorable Condition, over-whelmed with Poverty, by Reaſon of the Tyranny of Uſerers and unjuſt Extortioners. (A)

This Oppreſſion and Iniquity he entirely removed, partly by Perſuaſion, and partly by Authority; and oblidged all Perſons to make Reſtitution of their illegal Gain, and to ſwear they would do ſo no more.

When threatned with a Conſpiracy and Aſſaſſins to deſtroy him; - inſtead of being afraid, or having Recourſe whereby to conceal himſelf, He boldly anſwers, "ſhould ſuch a Man as I, flee? Who is

(A) Ut Navis ſubmerſa, omnes intùs Merces ſecum trahit; Ità, ſubverſâ Patriâ, Artes et Diſciplinæ, Leges et Dignitates confunduntur.

is there that being as I am, would go into the Temple to ſave His Life? - I will not go in." (A)

It is not for me, here, to purſue the Hiſtory at large; I had rather recommend the careful and attentive Peruſal of it, as peculiarly ſuitable in this Caſe, and as a glorious Example in ſuch Exigencies.

And! what, upon the Whole, was the Reſult of all his Labours?

He found Jeruſalem deſolated by War and an Heap of Rubbiſh, and left it in Peace, ſo well inhabited, adorned and fortified, that it ſoon became a City of Note, and recovered, in great Meaſure, its former Luſtre. (B) If

(A) *Ut turpi Loco Damnum præferendum; Ità, præſtat pro Patriâ honeſtè mori, quàm ſervilitèr vivere.*

(B) *Quid magìs omnibus Mortalibus, cujuſcunque Generis ac Conditionis, expetendum, quàm Pax et Concordia? Quæ alia Res melior, et utilior, aut jucundior eſſe poteſt? Hæc omnia et conſervat, præſtatquè incolumia ac ſalva, et auget, atquè Bonis multiplicibus complet. Hæc verò illa eſt quæ Opes, Divitias, Vitam denìquè ipſam et parat, et neutrit, atquè educat. Et quìd multis opus eſt? Nullum eſt Bonum in Terris Pace, nequè præſtantius, nequè optabilius. — Ut in portu quàm pelago tutior eſt Navis; Ità Pace quàm Bello ſecurior Res-Communis. — Nomen Pacis dulce eſt, et ipſa Res ſalutaris. — Pax eſt tranquilla Libertas. — Nulla, Salus Bello, Pacem te poſcimus omnes.* — However,

A Peace cannot be laſting, except the Conditions of it be reaſonable and honourable; for no People can live contented under ſuch a Law, as forceth them to loath the State in which they are.

All

If he had lived in ſome polite Age and Country, He would have had Statues and Monuments erected to his Memory, and all the Regard paid to him which a generous and ingenious People could beſtow upon true and real Merit (A) — But,

As what he did, was principally for the Service of God and of Religion, he deſired to have his Reward rather from God, than from Men; (B) and therefore

All Nations ought to deſire Peace, yet ſo as to be always prepared for War. "Every Purpoſe is eſtabliſhed by Councel, and with good Advice make War." — "The Horſe is prepared againſt the Day of Battle, But Safety is of the Lord."

Diù apparandum eſt Bellum, ut citiùs vincas. In omnibus Negotiis priuſquàm aggrediare, adhibenda eſt Preparatio diligens: parva enim ſunt Foris Arma, niſi eſt Concilium Domi. Bellum autem ità ſuſcipiatur, ut nihil aliud niſi Pax quæſita videatur. Suſcipienda quidèm Bella ſunt, ob hanc Cauſam, ut ſine Injuriâ in pace vivatur. Pax Bello paratur, nec eam tueri licet, niſi Cives ſint ad Bellum inſtructi. Nendo ſuperare Civitatem non facile eſt. Qui metuit, Arma induat. Quid valet Sagitarius abſque pharetrâ?

(A) No Paſſion ſo ſtrong in Man, and ſo univerſal in all Ages and Nations, as that of acquiring Glory by Publick Services. Not only Statues and Triumphs, but even Crowns of Leaves, beſtowed as a National Acknowledgment of diſtinguiſhed Merit, have always been purſued with as much Eagerneſs & Danger, as ever the Reward of Riches, poſſibly can. Of all the Affections that attend human Life, The Love of Glory is the moſt ardent; called by ſome, "A raging Fit of Virtue in the Soul." { "Honour's a Spark of Cœleſtial Fire. "That above Nature makes Mankind aſpire."

Virtus Repulſæ neſcia ſordidæ, — Intaminatis fulget Honoribus.

(B) As no Commendation is too great for thoſe, who, with the Governors

therefore, He breaks-forth once and again in these Words - "Think upon me, my God, for Good, and spare me according to the Greatness of thy Mercy."

He prays that God would accept his good Intentions, and forgive his Imperfections.

He had his Recompense in both Worlds; Happy in the Love of his People, and happy in seeing his honest Labours blessed with great Success; and his own History, written by himself, (being a Part of the Holy Scriptures,) transmits his Name, and his Reputation to all Generations, when Statues, and Pillars, with other frail Monuments of human Gratitude, moulder-away, and fall into Oblivion.

The

Governors of Israel, (in the Song of Deborah & Barak,) "offer themselves willingly, taking no Gain of Money" in the Defence of their Country; So, no Words can express the sordid Baseness of those, who, in Times of Danger, make Gain the principal Motive of all their Actions, & will not exert themselves, without first calculating the Reward of their Labours. - Are not Liberty, Peace & Property, sufficient Recompences? Or are Slavery, Indigence and Death, things really inconsiderable? May we not address such, in the Words of good Elisha the Prophet, to his mercinary Menial, Gahazi — "Is This a Time to receive Money, and to receive Garments, and Oliveyards and Vineyards, and Sheep and Oxen and Men-Servants and Maid-Servants? The Leprosy, therefore, of Naaman," - (the Poverty and Distress, the Desolation & Destruction, which they will not endeavour to repress,) "shall cleave unto thee, and thy House forever. — And he went out from his Presence, a Leper as white as Snow." — Disgrace and Death will be the Reward of such mercinary Indolence.

The Hiſtory thus laid down, we proceed to ground on it, as well from other Scriptures, the great Duty before us. — And here,

It may juſtly be affirmed that there is no one good and commendable Quality, of which there is not ſome Precept or Example in Scripture. - The Character of NEHEMIAH is full to the Purpoſe before us: Indeed, is ſingular and uncommon. For,

What Man is there among Thouſands, who, being ſecure in the profitable Poſts of Honour, at a Diſtance from Danger, but would ſpeak Peace and Joy to himſelf therein? and by no Means quit it for Penury and perilous Encounters in his own Country.

The preſent Mode is not to court, (however preſſing or reaſonable the Cauſe may be,) but flee from Danger.

How greatly, then, doth the Character before us reproach ſuch Conduct? - We, who are always at Hand, whoſe Lives and Liberties, whoſe Properties, and our all, is at Stake, if we are negligent herein!

"Remember this, and ſhew yourſelves Men! bring it again to Mind, O ye FAINT-HEARTED" - for the Danger will be wholly YOURS, and the Loſs EQUALLY to be ſuſtained. — But farther,

NEHEMIAH was Ruler of a Nation, and tho' therefore as ſuch, he can be no Example to PRIVATE Perſons

Perſons, yet is He an excellent One to Princes and Governours; who, if they would be eſteemed as He was, muſt act as He did. — For, tho' Wealth and Power may be obtained many Ways; yet Reſpect and Reputation can only be acquired by deſerving them. — But,

The Submiſſion which the ſober and religious Part of the Jews paid to NEHEMIAH is an Example to us how we ſhould behave ourſelves to thoſe whom God hath placed over us;

We ſhould willingly obey and aſſiſt them, and ſhew them the Reſpect due to their Station; and neither ſay, nor do any thing that may leſſen their Character, and weaken their Authority; but pray for their Peace and Proſperity, and by every poſſible Means promote it, upon which OUR OWN depends, and with which it muſt either ſtand or fall.

But farther, NEHEMIAH ſet the People an Example of Piety, and endeavoured, above all things, to make them religious, and thereby ſecure to them the Favour and Protection of God.

In this we ſhould imitate him, and ourſelves practiſe ſo noble an Injunction. — For indeed, without This it is in vain that we pretend to love our Country; Whoſoever neglects his Duty to God, cannot properly

properly perform his Duty to Man, eſpecially to the Publick, in a compleat and effectual Manner.

There are, (as there ever have been,) Men who have little Religion, and yet ſome Share of what we call Honour and Publick-Spirit, who would not injure their Nation for private Advantage, and would riſque their Lives and Fortunes for their Country: yet, Theſe Perſons often do MORE Harm another Way by their Immoralities, in ſetting bad Examples, and corrupting the Minds of Men, than they can compenſate by Intrepidity, Generoſity, and Honour; hereby bringing-down the heavy Judgments of God upon Men, who "puniſheth a Nation for the Wickedneſs of them that dwell therein."

There never was perhaps, a wiſer & greater Ruler than MOSES, or One who had a ſincerer Affection for the People committed to his Care. — His Piety enabled him many Times to ſave his Nation, when his Courage and his Conduct would have ſtood him in no Stead.

Often had God threatned to deſtroy the whole Congregation, and to make Him the Father and Founder of a NEW People; but by the Piety of his Life, and his earneſt Entreaties in their Behalf, he averted the Divine Wrath and obtained Pardon for them: - In all this there was ſomething extraordi-

nary

nary — But from the whole Tenor of the Scriptures it appears, that the Piety and Prayers of the Righteous are prevalent with God, and do many Times bring down Bleſſings upon themſelves, their Families, and Country. — If ſo, A POOR MAN, who is covered with Obſcurity, may by his Uprightneſs, and Interceſſion with his Heavenly Father, do his Country more Service, than the wiſeſt Stateſman, or the ableſt Commander, that is WICKED. - and! "If ſo in Poverty, how much more in Riches?" — Indeed, a Man of Virtue is an Honour to his Country, - a Glory to Humanity, - a Satisfaction to himſelf, and a Benefactor to the whole World: - He is Rich without Oppreſſion or Diſhoneſty, - Charitable without Oſtentation, - Courteous without Deceit, and Brave without Vice. — Upon the whole,

In the Character of NEHEMIAH we ſee Liberality, Diſintereſtedneſs, Courage, Induſtry, Uniformity of Conduct, and every ſocial Accompliſhment. And, - Tho our Situation and Circumſtances permit us not to do what he did, yet we may ſhew the ſame Temper, by acting boldly and honourably in our ſeveral Stations; encouraging Virtue, and the like; rejecting all unlawful Gain and private Profit, which are detrimental to Society: - relieving the Wants of our Brethren, & ſubmitting to the Inconveniencies

and

and Hardſhips, which the Publick-Good may, at any Time, require.

This is the general Duty of Subjects; and tho' we ſhould have no diſtinguiſhed Titles, profitable or honorary Preferments for theſe things; yet we may look up to God, with good NEHEMIAH, with much humble Confidence for Reward and Approbation for theſe our publick Exertions - "Think upon me, my God, for Good, according to all that I have done for this People." (A)

Thus much we gather from the great Example here recorded, in Proof of the Virtue before us: but, beſides This, there are not wanting other Arguments ſtrongly in Favour of it.

The Diſpoſition to poſtpone our temporal Advantage, (our ETERNAL at no Time, upon any Account, to be complimented-away,) and to hazard even Life itſelf, in Caſes of Moment, to the Publick, is immediately approved by every worthy Principle within us. — Accordingly,

We find this Quality not only much celebrated by

(A) A good Man finds the Reward of his Application to his Duty, in the Teſtimony of his own Conſcience; and the ſecret Pleaſure he feels in diſcharging it, makes him Amends for the Eſteem, the Acknowledgments or Praiſes, which he ſeldom meets with in the World.

by the moſt eminent Heathen Writers; but often recommended, (conſequently at leaſt,) by ſuch as have taught the World upon ſtill higher Authority.

That great Chriſtian Grace of Charity, is, (we know,) particularly characteriſed to us, as "SEEKING NOT HER OWN"

In another Place we are commanded, (which can only be underſtood in Reference to Matters of great and high Importance, by Reaſon of a contrary Injunction equally authoriſed,) "not to mind OUR OWN, but every Man, the things of ANOTHER;" and that probably, (as in the preſent Caſe,) we ſhall hereby moſt effectually ſecure the Welfare, the Benefit and Happineſs of Ourſelves, and of the Whole together. — Indeed,

In Caſes of National, and extraordinary Emergency, we ſhall find ourſelves, not only oblidged, but encouraged to part with every thing, (ſhort of Innocence, and with That, our Title to eternal Happineſs,) when our Country calls for it. — Indeed,

So far is Chriſtianity from giving Diſcouragement to the Love of our Country, or being unfriendly to Publick-Spirit, that it has laid the moſt ſolid, - perhaps the only ſolid Foundation, for an exalted Degree of this Virtue. — For,

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding a few ſhining Examples, which Hiſtory may furniſh, it is not eaſy to aſſign any ſubſtantial Reaſons, why they, who "have Hope in this Life only," ſhould be forward to reſign the Advantages of it: yet, when once our final Intereſts are (as upon Chriſtian Principles they are) ſecurely provided for: - Here is Room for every rational Argument in Favour of the Publick; - Here, every generous Sentiment may have its proper Force; - animated by ſuch Expectations, "none of us liveth to himſelf, and no Man dieth to himſelf;" — In the Cauſe of our Country, "we gladly ſpend, and are ſpent:" - indeed, "are ready to lay down our Lives for the Brethren." — Upon the Whole,

Our Country is entitled to our Affection in every View: - In Herself, as comprehending in it whatever, in this World, is moſt valuable; and therefore, in Competition with our ſecular Intereſts, is to be preferred, whenſoever her Proſperity calls upon us, to poſtpone; or her Preſervation, to relinquiſh them.

In a Word, — The Duty before us muſt, at leaſt, reſtrain us from ſacrificing our Country's Reputation or betraying her Intereſts out of any ſelfiſh Conſideration. We muſt not diſappoint her of our juſt Share of our Service, tho even our rendering it, ſhould, by that Means, "be to our Hindrance. But further,

And

And, that our Affections may not be thrown-away upon what is uſeleſs to our Country and unworthy of our Regard, let us proceed,

Laſtly, To conſider what thoſe Objects are, which a Friend to his Country will rationally have in his View; - and the Motives he has to defend them.

And theſe are, - The Peace and Proſperity of it, at all Times to be promoted, from a full & thorough Perſuaſion of the many and great Bleſſings hereby ſecured to us, whilſt itſelf is ſecure. [viz]

The Bleſſings of our Land; - The Government both in Church and State, - Our Families, Friends, and Favourites; - And laſtly, Our Religion itſelf.

The Words of NEHEMIAH are ſtrong to the Purpoſe. "Remember the Lord, (ſays he,) who is great "and terrible; and fight for your Brethren, your "Sons, and your Daughters, your Wives, and your "Houſes."

Theſe are Particulars, which we account our Glory and Happineſs; which, therefore, to defend, will be the beſt Advancement of our Nation's Proſperity, - and which themſelves will be the ſtrongeſt Motives, (in any Time of Danger,) to make us ſtand up boldly in their Defence. — And,

Firſt, "Remember the Lord, who is great and "terrible." We

We ought to love our Country, becauſe it is the Seat of true Religion, the Place where God hath choſen to put his Name, and to fix his Worſhip; and who hath, (during our Remembrance,) wrought many and great Deliverances for it; and "our Fathers have told us of" many more, "The Wonders which He did in their Time of Old;" and who therefore, we truſt, will ſtill deliver it.

Our Religion hath the immediate Stamp of the divine Impreſs upon it - being neither clouded with Superſtition, as in ſome Countries; nor tinctured with Enthuſiaſm, as in others; but is in moſt (A) Points, reaſonable and pure, as the Fountain from whence it flows.

It is an Ineſtimable Bleſſing of God to this Kingdom, that he not only vouchſafes us the Light of his Goſpel, but has alſo delivered it to us, with greater Purity and Sincerity, and freer from the Mixtures of Errors, than to any other People.

Were we all ſenſible of Religion in other Countries, we ſhould ſoon be convinced how exceedingly happy we of the ESTABLISHED Church are above them

(A) Our religious Syſtem and Conſtitution, (tho to call it perfect, would be to pay it a Compliment at the Expence of Truth; yet comparitively ſpeaking,) muſt be allowed far preferable to the Principles and Notions which prevail in other Parts of the Chriſtian World.

them all. - Let us, therefore firmly hold-faſt, maintain and defend the Truths we have been taught, and do profeſs. - Tho' No Church is Infallible, yet if the Truths of Religion are to be taken from the Rules of Holy Scripture, then this our Church, both as to Doctrine and Practice, is undoubtedly the pureſt this Day in the World; the moſt orthodox in Faith, the freeſt from Idolotry and Superſtition, and Enthuſiaſm, of any now extant.

We have the Scriptures in our own Hands, which are read daily in our Ears, with the divine Service, in a Language which we underſtand - "in our own Tongue wherein we were born" - and may, therefore, be each of us "wiſe for ourſelves" - even "wiſe unto Salvation."

To this Motive, drawn from the Conſideration of God, and the Excellency of his Religion, (as eſtabliſhed among us,) to excite us to maintain and defend it - we may add alſo, (tho' not expreſſed by the Prophet,) the Excellency of our Civil Conſtitution.

We ought to love our Country for the Sake of its Civil Government, which is neither tyrannical nor arbitrary, and equally removed from popular Licentiouſneſs; being in every Point wonderfully tempered in Wiſdom and Mercy: - where the good are rewarded, and the wicked ſuppreſſed; - where the

the wiſe are promoted, and the diligent helped forward and advanced; - in a Word, where Order, good Government, Peace, & Security are preſerved, whilſt Idleneſs, Profligacy and Confuſion are every where diſcouraged — "What Nation is there, that hath Statutes and Judgements ſo holy, ſo wiſe and good?" Whoſoever ſhall really ſound them, "muſt ſay that we are a wiſe and underſtanding People."

If therefore, we defend them not, we are not worthy of them, we are not worthy of thoſe Laws and Privileges which ſo advantageouſly diſtinguiſh us from other Kingdoms; and which therefore we ought to preſerve as a ſacred Depoſit, and tranſmit them to our Poſterity, & rather part with our Lives than our Liberty.

This is an other Motive to the Love and Defence of our Country. (A) Liberty,

(A) Cum Tempus, Neceſſitasquè poſtulat, decertandum Manu eſt; et Mors Servituti, Turpitudiniquè anteponenda. Vincit Amor Patriæ. Dulce et decorum eſt pro Patriâ mori. Non benè pro toto Libertas venditur Auro.

The Obligations of every Individual to defend and preſerve the eſtabliſhed Government, receive a vaſt Acceſſion of Strength, when we call to Mind, of what a noble and well-balanced Conſtitution we have the Happineſs to partake; a Conſtitution founded on Common-Reaſon, - Common-Conſent, and Common-Good; a Conſtitution of free and equal Laws, ſecured againſt arbitrary Will, and popular Licentiouſneſs, by an admirable Temperament of the governing Powers, controuling and controuled by one another.

Faults

Liberty, the darling Object of Mankind, whoſe Sound is gone out into all Lands, and the Word of it to the Ends of the World," is here held forth to all, in a greater Degree, than to any, in any Nation under Heaven, - Here the Governor, & the governed, have equally, in their reſpective Orders, a Claim to it - the Limits to each are wiſely marked out; and " tho, like the Ocean, they may either of them rage & ſwell, ſo that even the Mountains may, as it were, ſhake at the Tempeſt of the ſame;" yet, like it too, they have their certain Boundaries which they cannot paſs. " Hitherto ſhalt thou come, & no farther."

How diſſolute and execrable, then, muſt their Character and Conduct be, who will not willingly part with the leaſt Degree of either perſonal Eaſe or Emolument

Faults muſt belong to all earthly things, but never had any human Government fewer Faults than Ours; & under this Government, this Country hath ſtood and flouriſhed beyond all Example of Hiſtory.

How then, muſt every One who has an Underſtanding to obſerve, and Honeſty to acknowledge its happy Effects, venerate and love a Conſtitution, in which the Majeſty of the People is, and has been frequently recognized; Laws enacted or annulled only by their own Conſent, and for their own Good; in which none can be deprived of their Property, - abridged of their Freedom, or forfeit their Lives without an Appeal to the Laws, and to the Verdict of their Equals; - a Conſtitution, in fine, the Nurſe of Heroes, - the Parent of Liberty, the Patron of Learning & Arts, - the Dominion of Laws, - the Pride of our Country, - the Envy of our Neighbours, & their Sanctuary too.

Emolument, to preſerve inviolate, and entail in full Vigour to their Poſterity, ſuch a glorious Conſtitution, which hath been the Labour of ſo many Ages, and the Price of ſo much Blood! — Again,

Another ſtrong Inducement to the Love of our Country and to the manfully defending it, is, on Account of our Families and Friends.

"Our Brethren, our Wives, our Sons, and our Daughters," are near & dear unto us - many Times, dearer to us than even our Lives themſelves. Now, If we are deſtitute of all former Conſiderations, can we here want the manly Effort of defending and maintaining things ſo nearly and dearly allied to us? Human Nature, Common Sympathy, and Fellow-Feeling forbid it; indeed, rather tempt us, if not to court Danger, yet to out-brave every Obſticle of Defiance. (A) The

(A) Pugna pro Aris et Focis.

The ſocial Paſſions never afford ſuch tranſporting Pleaſure, or make ſo glorious an Appearance in the Eyes both of God and Man, as when, ſhaking-off every intereſted Motive, fired with the Sentiments of Patriotick Virtue, they prompt us to laudible and worthy Actions for the Public-Good.

The Love of our Country is One of the nobleſt Paſſions that can warm and animate the human Breaſt. Were we ſolitary Creatures, detatched from the reſt of Mankind, & without any Capacity of comprehending a Public Intereſt; or without Affections, leading us to deſire and purſue it, it would not be our Duty to regard it, nor criminal to neglect it. But, as we are Parts of the Public Syſtem, and are not only capable of taking-in large Views of its Intereſts, but by the ſtrongeſt

The laſt Particular mentioned by the Prophet, is "our Houſes;" by which we are to underſtand our Poſſeſſions and Country at large. The Beauty and Glory of which is juſtly the Envy of all Nations; being in its Nature and Situation, in the Nature of its Soil, and Temperature of its Climate, the Glory of all Lands. Being incirculed by the vaſt Ocean around us, and thereby defended from the Incurſion of bold Invaders; we ſeem no leſs incirculed by the Bleſſings of the Almighty in the Bleſſings of it, producing for us, in Abundance, every thing that either Neceſſity can require, or Luxury crave. (*) And, if this

ſtrongeſt Affections connected with it, we are therefore not only prompted to take a Share of its Concerns, but are under the moſt ſacred Ties to proſecute its Security and Welfare with the utmoſt Ardour, eſpecially in Times of publick Trial. Indeed, wherever it prevails in its genuine Power and Extent, it ſwallows-up all ſordid and ſelfiſh Regards; It conquers the Love of Eaſe, Power, Pleaſure, and Wealth; indeed, when the amiable Partialities of Friendſhip, Gratitude, private Affection, or Regards to a Family, come in Competition with it, it will teach us bravely to ſacrifice all, in Order to maintain the Rights, and promote and defend the Honour and Happineſs of the publick and general Welfare. — *Nihil eſt ex omnibus Rebus humanis præclarius aut præſtantius, quàm de Repub. benè mereri.* — *Vincit Amor Patriæ.*

(*) Ω φιλία Γη Μητερ, ως σεμνον σφοδρ' ει
Τοις νυν εχουσι χθημα; —— —— Menand.

Dear native Land, how do the Good and Wiſe
Thy happy Clime and countleſs Bleſſings prize!

this be too little, (as our Land is ſmall in herſelf,) She ſpreads her Sails into the moſt diſtant Parts, and reconveyes the choiceſt of the Gifts, whether of Nature, or Art, thro the Whole of the extenſive World, in Abundance unto us. — Upon the Whole,

As our Country, (whether conſidered in itſelf, or we more rationally underſtand by it, the collective Body of its Inhabitants, with their publick & joint Intereſts,) contains every thing that is, in any eminent Degree, entitled to our Affections; - Prudence, therefore, as well as Juſtice require every Member of it to beſtow a due Meaſure of his Concern upon the Community, (i.e) to expend a Part of his Care by Way of enſuring the Benefit of the Whole.

In a Word, The Fate of Nations, no leſs than that of Individuals, we are taught, is under the immediate Direction and Superintendence of Providence, to be carried on in the natural Way of ſeeming SECOND Cauſes and reaſonable human Efforts.

To be wanting, therefore, in our own Part, as it is a betraying our own Cauſe; ſo, whoever, (according to the Province God hath placed him in, or even beyond it, if extraordinary Abilities are given him,) ſhall exert himſelf for the Publick Welfare and Safety, (when it requires it,) may truly be ſaid to fight God's Battles, and to take-part in the Operations

rations of the Moſt High, "by whom Kings reign, & Princes decree Judgment;" - and for this Reaſon cannot but be approved of by a God, in the Defence of whoſe Cauſe he is embarked.

This is concluſive even in the Affairs of Men, how much more then in the Affairs of God, "all whoſe Ways are Mercy and Truth unto ſuch as keep his Covenant, and remember his Commandments to do them." Indeed,

As much as the Happineſs and Welfare of Nations exceeds that of Individuals, ſo Much more muſt God be ſuppoſed to have regard hereto, & to bleſs and reward accordingly.

It was upon this and the foregoing Conſiderations, that the Royal Pſalmiſt expreſſed himſelf with that Ardour for his Country, and for JERUSALEM, the chief Place in it.

"O Pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem, they ſhall proſper that love thee. Peace be within thy Walls, and Plentuouſneſs within thy Pallaces — For my Brethren and Compa/nions' Sake, I will wiſh thee Proſperity — yea, becauſe of the Houſe of the Lord our God, I will ſeek to do thee Good."

To Conclude, — There is a Diſpoſition of Mind called Publick-Spirit, or "the Love of our Country," which good Men in all Ages have exerted; which

which prudent Men have encouraged, by endeavouring to make it fashionable & honourable; — which ingenuous Men have consecrated to Immortality by their Praises of it; which few Men, (how profligate soever,) have had the Imprudence to censure openly, - and which Ridicule, (that spares nothing,) hath been almost afraid to attack: being approved of by God, and "good and beneficial to Men." (A)

Indeed, Publick Spirit, - heroic Zeal, - Love of Liberty, and the other Political Duties, do, above all

(A) If Men could but reflect and consider the great and generous Seeds planted in them, that might, (if rightly cultivated,) enoble their Lives, and make their Virtue venerable to Futurity, how could they, without Pain, perceive the universal Degeneracy from that Publick-Spirit, which ought to be, (under Religion,) the first and principal Motive of all their Actions?

The Greeks and Romans were wise enough to keep up This great Incentive; with them it was impossible to be in Esteem, without being a Patriot. All Gallantry had its first Source from hence; and to want a Warmth for the Publick Welfare, was a Defect so exceeding mean, base, and degenerate, that he who was guilty of it, had no Pretence to Honour or Manhood.

When the universal Bent of a People seems diverted from a Sense of the common Good and Glory, it looks like a Fatality, or Crisis, of impending Ruin. — Those that contribute None of their Labour or Fortune to the Publick, may be said to desert the Community.

See Knox's Essays, No. 81. On the peculiar Propriety of exciting personal Merit and manly Virtue, in Times of publick Distress and Difficulty: And also No. 83. On the Propriety of adorning Life, and serving Society by laudible Exertion.

all others, recommend thoſe who practiſe them, to the Admiration and Homage of Mankind, becauſe, as they are the Offspring of the nobleſt Minds, ſo are they the Parents of the greateſt Bleſſings to Society.

Theſe ſurely are Arguments ſufficient to rouze a Spirit and Zeal for our Country, that we may at all Times defend & maintain it, as it is, in every View, "The Glory of all Lands."

Sermon

SERMON IV.

The Influence of Religion upon States and Governments.

Prov. xiv. 34. "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, "but Sin is a Reproach to any People."

Whoever conſiders the Doctrine advanced in the Words before us, muſt naturally reflect ſomewhat on the State of Virtue and Vice, as they ſeverally appear to prevail in that Nation, of which he is a Member; and under that Government, to which he is ſubject: for, it is impoſſible that the moſt abſtract Recluſe ſhould diveſt himſelf of all Feeling for publick, national Concerns; which are, by no one thing, ſo much bleſſed, or blaſted, as by their Attention to, or Diſregard of, Virtue and Religion - God having made this, the Standard of our Conduct in theſe great Matters, (A) that He might extirpate Vice, and raiſe Religion upon the Ruins of it. — Indeed, If

(A) Jeremiah xviii. 7, &c. to verſe 11.

If we conſider the Hiſtory of Mankind, without this View, & merely as the Work of human Counſels, no Proſpect can be more melancholy & diſpleaſing; we ſee nothing but unſteady and fluctuating Deſigns, weak and periſhing Attempts; a rude Heap of tumultuous Events lying in Confuſion; Kingdoms riſing after Kingdoms, as it were by Chance, aſtoniſhing the World for a while, and then ſinking into Oblivion; &, (in a Word,) all Hiſtory broken into ten thouſand Fragments. But if we will take along with us to the Study of Hiſtory, a Maxim from the inſpired Volume; if Reaſon will ſubmit to be taught by Revelation, and to kindle its Lamp at that ſacred Flame, a new Light will be ſpread over the obſcure Maſs; and the hiſtoric Page, which was before hardly legible, will become clear and perfectly intelligible. For, though nothing but Confuſion can be expected from weak and erring Man, yet HE who is the Fountain of Wiſdom and Might, is forever at the Head of all human Affairs; and the Deſigns of Heaven, mixing with the Deſigns of Men, ſubdue them into Order, and give them a Permanency which is not their own: and thus, amidſt all the Intricacies of interfering Events and claſhing Intereſts, one great & noble Purpoſe of Providence is ſtill carried on, [viz] the general Intereſts of Virtue and Religion. This

This Doctrine runs through all Revelation, and is in the ſtrongeſt and moſt explicit Terms delivered in the Text. The Wiſe-Man, (from his Experience of things, and Knowledge of Cauſes and their Effects, particularly of Religion, and God's providential Diſpenſations according to it,) utters this wiſe Aphoriſm before us - "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; but Sin is a Reproach to any People:" in which he acknowledges God's Supremacy and ſovereign Rule; and that all the Viciſſitudes of Times which Hiſtory relates; the Changes of Power, with the Elevation and Overthrow of Empires, are no other than Parts of the great Plan of Adminiſtration conducted by his wiſe Providence, according to the Demerits of Nations before him.

What Solomon thus utters by divine Inſpiration we read in the Records of Ages already paſt. - Hiſtory, therefore, ſhould kindle in our Breaſts an ardent Deſire to approve ourſelves before God in all virtuous Conduct, ſince, upon this Account only it is that we are to expect his Bleſſing upon us. - All the great Revolutions of the World, whether of Kingdoms, States or Societies, turn upon this Point, which become either proſperous or depreſſed, according to their Attatchment to either Virtue or Vice.

I ſhall, therefore, purſue theſe Reflections, as a

Subject

Subject by no Means unappoſite to the preceeding Duty of Patriotiſm and Public-Spirit, as it will point out ſome of the Marks of Wiſdom that appear in the Conſtitution and Government of the World; and conſequently induce all Men to act their ſeveral Parts, aright, that they may be the deſerved Objects of divine Preſervation. And, — In doing This, I ſhall ſhew,

Firſt, That the Conſtitution of things by which the World is divided into ſeveral diſtinct Societies and Kingdoms, and by which thoſe Kingdoms become ſubject to Changes, Revolutions, & Overthrow, is, upon the Whole, not only favourable to Virtue & the Publick-Good, but generally depends upon it. "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation." And then,

II. I ſhall ſee what Influence the due Conſideration of this Doctrine ought to have upon us, in Regard to the regulating our Lives & Converſations.

Firſt, I am to ſhew, that the preſent Conſtitution of the World is, upon the Whole, not only favourable to Virtue and the Public-Good, but generally depends upon it. — And here,

There are THREE Ways in which Mankind may poſſibly be ſuppoſed to exiſt. As firſt, in a State of Diſſipation and Anarchy. But they could not long continue

continue in this State. For ſo far is it from being a State of Nature, (though it hath generally been diſtinguiſhed by that Title,) that our Nature would lead us as faſt as poſſible out of it. There is within us a ſociable and attractive Principle, which joined with our mutual Wants and Dependencies, forms Mankind into Societies, as naturally as the Parts of Matter run into diſtinct Maſſes. And Societies of any Kind, being once formed; a common Intereſt ariſes, which neceſſarily leads to Laws, Subordination, and Government. — Or ſecondly, Mankind may be ſuppoſed to exiſt under ONE univerſal Government. But This being a Machine too unwieldy for the Management of human Power, would naturally reſolve itſelf into ſeveral ſmaller Bodies.

Theſe two Conditions, then, lead alike to a Third, which hath actually taken-place in all Ages, in which the World is divided into ſeveral independent Societies and Governments. — This alone hath a Right to be conſidered as a State of Nature, for the ſame Reaſon which leads us to call That the natural State of the material World wherein it is diſtinguiſhed into a beautiful Variety of Bodies; and not That wherein it is reſolved into certain imaginary Atoms, which are ſuppoſed to be the firſt Principles of all Bodies. — With no Kind of Propriety can we call any

any other State natural, but That to which our Nature inclines us, and in which the Laws of our Nature take-place. This State gives many Advantages to Virtue, and in many Ways promotes the Public-Good.

Benevolence is the Principle by which Societies are held together. But did it exiſt only in That Degree in which it is extended to ALL Mankind, the Band would be too weak. Spread over the whole World, Benevolence would have too large a Field. To render it more active and uſeful, it muſt be compreſſed within narrower Bounds. — The Diſtribution of Mankind into various Societies, the Riſe, the Progreſs, and the Declenſion of thoſe Societies, are all plainly calculated to form, to ſtrengthen, and to renew this ſocial Bond. Too large a Space lay between PRIVATE and UNIVERSAL Love. Something was wanting to form a Communication between them. The Love of our Country, therefore, was interpoſed; and through the various Gradations of Society, Benevolence is led-on from Diſtance to Diſtance, and is thus trained-up by Degrees to take the boldeſt Flights. And, as in a fine Proſpect the Sight is not all at once loſt in a vaſt Extent of empty Air, but is carried forward from Object to Object to the utmoſt Horizon; ſo in the ſocial Affections there

are

are many intermediate Circles between the wideſt & the narroweſt, and from the Love of Family we advance by eaſy Steps through Friends, Citizens and Countrymen, to the Love of Mankind, at large.

No ſooner are we thrown into diſtinct Societes and Governments than Order ſtarts-up out of Confuſion, the rude and ſavage Multitudes, which before overran the Earth, are reduced into well proportioned Bodies, and the Chaos becomes a Creation. A new Set of Relations and Duties ariſes, a new Field is opened to Virtue. If we conſider only the internal Conſtitution of any ſeparate Kingdom, we ſee the Laws of Politics and good Government riſing on thoſe of Morals. If we go farther, and conſider the Relation of Kingdoms to each other, we ſee Duties of a ſuperiour Order riſing ſtill higher than the former, and giving-birth to the Law of Nations. Mankind, combined into Bodies, are capable of many great Enterprizes, for which they would be otherwiſe abſolutely unfit. The Subjects of every Government are united by a common Intereſt, and act as if they were informed by one common Soul. Their Powers of every Kind are encreaſed, and become equal to the greateſt Attempts. Works of public Utility are ſet on Foot, - Manufactures are eſtabliſhed, - Commerce is extended, - Arts are improved,

and

and public Virtue diſpenſes all its Bleſſings.

Behold a virtuous Prince at the Head of an obedient People, exerciſing the godlike Power of extending Happineſs to Millions; and you will hardly be able to perſuade yourſelf that you do not ſee ſomething more than human. (A) And though this ſupreme Lot of human Felicity falls indeed to the Share of few; yet, in a well regulated Government, every Member, in Proportion to his Station and Abilities, hath an enlarged Sphere of Action, a Capacity of doing-good, beyond what he could have had under any other Condition.

It can be thought no juſt Objection to this Plan of Adminiſtration, that this encreaſed Power is often miſapplied. — Heaven furniſhes Man with Powers and Abilities. The Application of thoſe Powers to good or ill Purpoſes conſtitutes the Merit or Demerit of every Man's Character, and therefore the Direction of them is ordinarily left to his Free-Will, guided by proper Lights.

But

(A) A virtuous Prince is capable of doing-good much more effectually in a Territory limited within reaſonable Bounds, ſuch as the World is generally divided into, than he could have been at the Head of an univerſal Monarchy, that vain Dream of ſome Princes' boundleſs Ambition. His limited Power would there be loſt upon too vaſt an Object, which produces its full Effect upon an Object proportioned to his Abilities.

But in Fact, in this Conſtitution of things, Proviſion is made with no leſs Wiſdom for the checking and controuling of Vice, than to give Strength and Succeſs to Virtue. The Laws ſuſtained by the collected Power of a People, operate ſtrongly againſt the Vices of Individuals, and lay ſome Reſtraint at leaſt upon wicked Princes. Indeed, even in thoſe Kingdoms where Princes are above the Controul of Laws, their Vices are confined within ſome certain Bounds. The neighbouring States and Kingdoms form a Barrier around them, which they cannot, without Difficulty, paſs. By their Vigilance the pernicious Deſigns of an ambitious Prince are reſtrained. Their Jealouſy confines and often puniſhes his Ambition. And thus the Tempeſt falls upon a ſingle Spot, which otherwiſe might have carried Deſolation over half the World. — If Kingdoms were virtuous, they would be everlaſting. But as This can hardly happen, it is for the Intereſt of Virtue that they ſhould fall when they become corrupted. (A)

To ſee more clearly, therefore, the Marks of Wiſdom in the Fall of Empires, we will briefly conſider their natural Courſe, and the Circumſtances that uſually

(A) Luxury and Delicacy of Manners in any State are infallible Symptoms of its Declenſion; For when Men are ſo over-curious and nice in their own Concerns and Intereſt, the Good of the Publick is generally neglected.

uſually accompany their Origin, their Progreſs, and Decline. And firſt,

Kingdoms in their Infancy are under a Neceſſity of cultivating the hardy and manly Virtues. Nothing but this internal Strength can enable them to reſiſt the Acts of Violence to which they are ever expoſed from ſome powerful Neighbour, and to ſurmount thoſe Difficulties with which they muſt continually ſtruggle. Temperance and Frugality are the natural Produce of the Times, the vigorous Growth of a barren Soil. But this is not all. The Subjects of an infant State are united amongſt each other by the ſtrongeſt Ties. The common Intereſt is felt by all, & is at That Time ſo clear and ſimple a thing, that it cannot be miſtaken. The Connection between public and private Good, is ſo evident, that no One attempts to ſeparate them, much leſs to ſet up an Oppoſition between them. Every One ſees that he has no Way of purſuing his own Intereſt but by Means of the Public. Every Eye, therefore, is fixed on the Public Safety, and even watches with Jealouſy over the Intereſts of their fellow Subjects, becauſe every Danger, though but of a Part, threatens Ruin to the Whole. The Proſperity, the Safety of every little Family is involved in the common Weal; every public Loſs ſhakes each private Fortune,

tune, and every Acquiſition to the Public ſtrengthens and enriches every Individual. — In a Word, - in ſuch a State, Virtue is ſeldom either neglected or unrewarded. It is of ſuch immediate Service to the Public that it is eagerly ſought for every where, and drawn from its Obſcurity; and becauſe every one partakes in its Benefits, is therefore applauded by every Voice. (A)

That Activity and Srength of Conſtitution which is natural to Kingdoms in their early Periods, cannot fail of bringing them forwards, and of extending Dominions & encreaſing their Power, till at length from a Concurrence of various Cauſes theſe Principles are weakened and loſt. Proſperity, Eaſe, Indulgence, Weakneſs, and Overthrow, follow each other in a natural Train. (B) Nor is it only that the Strength

(A) Nothing can be ſeen finer than the Image of the Reign of Auguſtus, after the Death of Cæſar. Plain-Dealing is recalled to the Bar; Diſcord is baniſhed the State; Equity and Juſtice return to the City, attended with Ability and Induſtry; the Magiſtrates reſumed their Authority; the Senators, their ancient Majeſty; Decrees and Judgments, their wonted Force: The Citizens were reinſpired with a generous Emulation of doing good Actions, or forced upon ſuch by a happy Neceſſity: Virtue is honoured, and Vice puniſhed; the inferior Rank have a Veneration for the Superior, without any Mixture of Awe or Averſion; and the latter conſider the former without any Sentiments of Contempt.

(B) "Peace begets Plenty; - Plenty begets Pride; - Pride begets

Strength of Individuals is impaired by the Opportunities of Eaſe and Indulgence. In an extenſive and flouriſhing Kingdom many Circumſtances contribute to break that Union amongſt its Subjects in which its original Strength conſiſted, to nurſe the ſelfiſh Paſſions, and to weaken the ſocial Affections. There is no longer that cloſe Connection which before ſubſiſted between the public and private Good, which made publick Succeſs the greateſt private Bleſſing that could happen. Men now begin to look upon theſe as TWO VERY DIFFERENT Objects; and as PRIVATE Intereſt enlarges and becomes more conſiderable, the PUBLIC diminiſhes in their Eyes, & they behold it with more Indifference. In a wide extended Territory there is not that common Feeling for each other, which makes the Good of every one the general Concern. (A) The Fortunes of

gets War; - War begets Poverty; and Poverty, Peace, &c.

Pacis Comites, Licentia et Libido, Diſcrimina nec pauciora nec minora quàm Belli habent; illa enim Corporibus, hæc Animis Peſtem ferunt. Ut quo placidior eſt Aqua, altius eſt Flumen; Ità, quo tranquiliora ſunt Regna, majoribus ſæpè immergantur Vitiis. See Knox's Eſſays No. 127. On the Advantages derivable from National Adverſity.

(A) As the Abſence of an ill Prince ſeldom fails of raiſing Diſquiets and Commotions among the People, in a Government which is obeyed only from Fear; ſo nothing contributes more to the Satisfaction and Obedience of Subjects, than the Preſence of a good King: and

of Individuals may periſh; indeed, whole Provinces may fall, while the central Parts of this vaſt Body hardly feel the Shock. The habitual Application which every Subject gives to the Care of his private Fortune contracts the Affections inſtead of enlarging them, - draws them off from the Public, and centers them within his own narrow Concerns. The Purſuit of Commerce, (A) and of all gainful Arts, the Acquiſition of Riches, Extent of private Property, Love of Pleaſure, (B) Ambition of Honours; all have a ſtrong Tendency this Way. In Proportion as they feed private and ſelfiſh Love, they weaken the Love of

and this is the Reaſon why all diſtant Provinces, governed by Commiſſions or ſubordinate Authorities, are ſo ſubject to frequent Seditions and Revolts, how lawfully ſoever they are inherited, or how well ſoever they are eſtabliſhed, after any new Conqueſt or Acquiſition; the Force and Influence of Authority growing ſtill weaker by the Change of Hands, and Diſtance of Place.

(A) It is reckoned amongſt the Cauſes which raiſed and gave Permanency to the Roman Republic, that this brave People never practiſed Commerce, nor the lucrative Arts. Leaving theſe to Slaves, their only Occupation was the Art of War, and This their only Way to Magiſtracies and Honours. The Military Virtues, therefore, remained amongſt them after all others were gone, and upheld their Empire almoſt beyond its natural Period.

(B) It is obſerved that the moſt delicate and voluptuous Princes have ever been the heavieſt Oppreſſors of the People; Riot being a far more laviſh Spender of the common Treaſure, than either War or Magnificence.

of the Public. Competitions ariſe; - ſeparate Intereſts are purſued every where, croſſing and interfering with each other; Virtue is ſo far from meeting with public Encouragement, that Jealouſy and Envy join with every faſhionable Accompliſhment to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs it, as a dangerous Rival: and thus is the Band weakened by which Society is held together, and the Way is prepared for its Diſſolution. (A)

If it be aſked how far a Kingdom may with Safety extend its Dominions, & at what Period of Increaſe it may be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt in its uttmoſt Perfection; the Reply muſt be; that this, indeed, depends upon

(A) The Decrees of Heaven are wrapped up in the Clouds, and the Events of future things hidden in the Dark from the Eyes of mortal Men. The wiſeſt Counſels may be diſcompoſed by the ſmalleſt Accidents, and the ſecureſt Peace of States and Kingdoms, may be diſturbed by the lighteſt Paſſions, as well as by the deep Deſigns of thoſe who govern them. For, tho the wiſe Reflections of the beſt Hiſtorians, as well as the common Reaſonings of private Men, are apt to aſcribe the Actions and Councels of Princes to Intereſt or Reaſons of State; yet, whoever can trace them to their true Spring, will be forced to derive them, afterwards, from the ſame Paſſions and perſonal Diſpoſitions which govern the Affairs of private Life.

No Government can flouriſh, where the Morals and Manners of the People are corrupted. For, take away the Awe of Religion, and all that Fidelity and Juſtice, ſo neceſſary for the keeping up of human Society, muſt periſh with it. —"For the Tranſgreſſion of a Land, many are the Princes thereof; but by a Man of Underſtanding & Knowledge the State ſhall be prolonged."

upon various Circumſtances in the Situation and Genius of a People. (A) Yet this general Rule may aſſiſt us in forming the Eſtimate, that a Kingdom THEN ſubſiſts in its fulleſt and beſt Proportion, when

(A) Nature hath ſet certain Bounds to Kingdoms for the Mortification of their Pride and Ambition. — It is certain that there are in the very Face of the Globe itſelf many Obſtacles to the Progreſs of unmeaſured boundleſs Ambition; many natural Lines drawn, which ſeem to have been intended for the Boundaries of Kingdoms, and by which they are moſt conveniently circumſcribed. However, this Circumſtance muſt not be conſidered alone, but muſt always be joined with the Genius of the People. If we would form any juſt Concluſions concerning the Extent to which a Kingdom may be carried without Injury to itſelf, the Situation and the Genius of a People muſt always be combined. On this Principle it muſt be allowed, that a commercial Kingdom, placed in a Situation favourable to Commerce, is, of all others capable of the greateſt Extent. Commerce carries on a conſtant Circulation thro the whole Body of a Kingdom, and opens a free Communication between its remoteſt Parts. It forms a new and artificial Connection, which ſtrengthens that natural Dependance which Mankind have upon each other; and by its various Ties, not only binds the different Claſſes of People in a Kingdom to each other, but likewiſe Kingdom to Kingdom in the firmeſt Alliances. Where the Colonies of ſuch a Kingdom are well choſen, it is hard to ſay what Bounds can be ſet to it: becauſe every new Acquiſition of this Kind adds to the public Strength, by increaſing that Commerce on which the public Strength is founded, and quickening that Circulation by which the different Parts of a Kingdom are united. — Thus much, however, we can with Confidence affirm, that no King will ever be able to hold the Balance of diſtant Territories, if he knows not how to hold the Balance of his own; for his Reputation abroad will riſe or ſink, as his Affairs go well or ill at Home.

when the Love of our Country forms a juſt Mean between private and public Love and Affection. Below (A) this Period, Patriotiſm is not ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed from private Affection: Beyond (B) it, it begins to be confounded with univerſal. A Society too ſmall wants the requiſite Power: a Society too large wants the requiſite Union. And this ſhews the Wiſdom of Providence in laying out the World in general into Kingdoms of moderate Dimenſions.

Often doth Heaven interpoſe to check the Progreſs of Corruption, and by wholeſome Severities to ſave a licentious People haſtening to Ruin. War and the whole Train of natural Calamities (c) come

as

(A) This was the Caſe of the ancient Patriarchal Governments; and we have numerous Inſtances to the ſame Purpoſe in the Hords, the Tribes, and Clans of modern Times.

(B) This was the Caſe of the Roman Empire, and of that which is ſometimes called the Macedonian, and ſometimes the Grecian, but which might with more Propriety be called the Alexandrian Empire; becauſe it was not the Work of a Nation, but, what is peculsar to itſelf, was raiſed by One Man, and fell with him.

(C) *Rurſus in Arma feror.* —— —— ——
Arma amens capio, nec ſat Rationis in Armis.
Sævit Amor Ferri, et Scelerata inſania Belli.
Et Belli Rabies, et Amor ſucceſſit habendi.
Paucas Mars Opes præbet, Truncos verò Corporis plurimos. Fames, Peſtis, et Bellum Populi ſunt Pernicies. Horrida

as the Miniſters of Providence to correct the Abuſes of Proſperity, and to reſtore the Intereſts of decayed Virtue

— — — Horrida Bella,
Et Tybrim multo ſpumantem Sanguine cerno.
Quis fuit horrendos primus qui protulit Enſes?
Quàm ferus, et verè ferreus ille fuit!
Dicere difficile eſt, quid Mars tuus egerit illìc,
Quotquè Neci dederis, quosquè quibusque Modis.
Tunc Cædes Hominum Generi, tum prælia nata,
Tunc brevior diræ Mortis operta Via eſt.
Quis Furor, O Cives! Quæ tanta Licentia Ferri?
Laſſabunt agiles aſpera Bella Vires.
Nè Pueri, nè tanta Animis aſſueſcite Bella,
Neù Patriæ validas in Viſcera vertite Vires.

Nullum eſt tàm juſtum Bellum, quo non potior ſit iniqua Pax, ſivè Curas, Sumptus, aut Diſcrimina conſideres, et contemplaris. Milites ſcelerati ſpoliant et prædantur, et miſerabilitèr atquè immiſericorditèr affligunt miſeros: Quicquid autem ex Stipendio, quicquid ex prædationibus, Sacrilegiis, Rapinis, Furtis parare licuit, id totum abſumunt in Vina, Scorta et Aleam. Ut Feræ impetuosè feruntur ad Prædam captandam: Ità, rapaces Milites per Fas Nefasquè ruunt ad Spolia. Quid nunc dicemus de Militibus, qui ſivè quo eant, ſivè redeant, furantur, rapiunt, conſtuprant, pulſant, abigunt pecora, pertuſis Vaſis ſinunt effluere Vinum; Quid multis? crudeliùs aliquandò tractant ſuos, quàm Hoſtes. Hoc autem appellant "Jus Militare," et ad hæc connivent Principes. — Superbia, Crudelitas, Furor et Rabies plerumquè ſunt Victoriæ Comites, a quibus ſæpè clariſſimi Victores turpiſſimè victi ſunt. Vix poteſt magna Victoria parvo pretio conſtare: Victoria autem magno empta, non eſt Victoria, ſed Calamitas: (eſt ubi flet Victor,) interdùm igitur felicius eſt non aſſequi, quàm nimio mercari quod ambis.

Moderanda eſt Victoria, nec ſeviendum in eos qui contrà ferre Arma deſiſtunt. - Hæ tibi erunt Artes, Pacisquè imponere Morem, parcere ſubjectos, et debellare ſuperbos.

"Be

Virtue. THEN doth a Nation, alarmed at the Danger

" Be theſe thy Arts; to bid Contention ceaſe,
" Chain up ſtern War, and give the Nations Peace;
" O'er ſubject Lands extend thy gentle Sway,
" And teach with Iron-Rod the haughty to obey."

An Enemy once ſubdued and diſabled, ſhould be treated with Humanity. The Hero lifteth his Sword againſt the Enemy that reſiſteth; but no ſooner doth he ſubmit, than he is ſatisfied.

It is not in Honour to trample on the Object that feareth; It is not in Virtue to inſult what is beneath it: Subdue the inſolent & ſpare the humble, and thou art at the Height of Victory.

'Non minoris Virtutis eſt partâ Victoriâ benè uti, quàm vincere. Quandò Hoſtis in Poteſtate eſt; quandò Ultionis oblata eſt Facultas, datur tantum Experimentum tui, an Iræ Mancipium, an Clementiæ ſis Amicus. Qui moderatè utitur Victoriâ, bis vincit; primùm Hoſtem, deindè Animum: bis interimitur qui ſuis Armis perit. — See No. 350 of the Spectator.

An Alexander, or a Cæſar, ſpreading Death and Devaſtation, are Comets, which blaze ſeldom in the World; And! happy for the World, that they do ſo! Too little acquainted with Peace, Madmen of this Sort would render it an univerſal ACELDAMA, " a Field of Blood!" Miſerable Princes, how dire an Account muſt you have to give hereafter, whoſe Luſt of Sway, and Thirſt of Power, have unſheathed the bloody Sword of War, let loſe the Agents of Ruin & Havock and rendered you the Inſtruments of univerſal Miſery, and the general Curſe of your ſuffering Fellow-Creatures. What a happy Condition is that, which gives a Man ſo frequent Opportunities to do good to ſo many Thouſands! What a dangerous Poſt is that, which expoſes a Man to do Hurt to ſo many Millions!

Quicquid delirant Reges, plectuntur Achivi.
" When Kings, thro Pride, do madly fall,
" Th' unhappy Subjects ſuffer all."

Happy are we, if we be but ſenſible of our Happineſs, in our pacific

ger, turn back to thoſe Principles from which it had departed; private Intereſt once more awakens a Concern for the Public; the COMMON Danger again unites a People over whom every better Principle had loſt its Power; the Importance of Virtue to the public Service is again diſcovered, and Virtue comes once

pacific Employments and inferior Station. How dangerous a thing is Power! Succeſs at laſt, how fatal! It had been well for many a Conqueror, if he had been cut-off in his firſt Battle, before he was intoxicated with his Victories, or had acquired that habitual Thirſt for the Deſtruction of his Fellow-Creatures, which is called Glory, but will cover him with everlaſting Confuſion. "I beheld; and the Heaven departed as a Scrool, and every Mountain and Iſland were removed out of their Places: and the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty Men, hid themſelves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains; and ſaid to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne." For ſuch Princes as theſe, it was, that "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the King it is prepared: He hath made it deep and large: the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood; the Breath of the Lord, like a Stream of Brimſtone, doth kindle it." See Knox's Eſſays No. 100. On the Folly and Wickedneſs of War.

Happy BRITAIN, as in a thouſand other Particulars, ſo in the peculiar Favour of Heaven on thy Climate; which no pernicious or rapacious Animals inhabit; through which never ſtalks, furious with Hunger, the devouring Tyger! Happy Britain, whoſe Fields ſmile with Plenty, and over whoſe Plains roves fair Freedom, unmoleſted, and bleſt to her Wiſh; while ſtudious to protect thee, a venerable Monarch ſways thy Scepter, who never draws the Sword, but in the Defence of Freedom, and his People; who rejoices to diffuſe Bleſſings around him; who ſtands the illuſtrious beneficent Diſpenſer of Good, and the univerſal Delight of his People!

once more into Repute. (A) But if a People is ſo far ſunk in Profligacy that all theſe Admonitions are loſt upon them, if the Maſter of the Vineyard cometh Year after Year ſeeking for Fruit and findeth none, then how juſtly doth that Decree go forth, "cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?" (B)

And

(A) Pax auget Facultates.

Reformation is the great End of all Calamities, public and private. They are manifeſtly calculated to produce this Effect, and it muſt be the Fault of Nations as well as Individuals, if they are not Both the better for them. Nations, no Doubt, would wiſh to enjoy perpetual Peace and Proſperity, as Individuals would uninterrupted Health; but it is not for the Happineſs of either to be indulged in his Wiſh.

We may, indeed, ſubmit it to every juſt Obſerver of Mankind, & every competent Judge of the true Intereſts of a People, whether the Wars, in which we are at any Time engaged, have not been in ſome Reſpects, a Bleſſing to this Nation; whether they have not recalled us from that Effeminacy into which we were ſinking faſt, and which was but too juſtly complained of in the Beginning of them; and brought us back ſome Steps at leaſt towards that National and manly Character by which we have been diſtinguiſhed in former Times: And whether even that Diminution of Wealth which appears ſo extremely alarming to ſome, if it is ſuffered to produce its proper Effect upon us, to check that unbounded Profuſion, that worthleſs Emulation in every Branch of Luxury and idle Expence which were fed by its Redundancy, and to revive amongſt us a Spirit of Induſtry and plain Sobriety, whether even this Draining of our National Wealth, which, in the Eſtimate of ſome, is the greateſt Evil that could befall us, will not leave us an happier People than any Addition to our Treaſures would have done.

(B) Frangitur ipſa ſuis Roma ſuperba Bonis.

It was an Obſervation of a wiſe Politician, (Machivel,) and one who

And mark how favourable to Virtue is the Event, and how well its Intereſts are preſerved even in the Extirpation and Overthrow of Kingdoms. For, it is not only that a Maſs of Corruption is ſwept-away, & a Scene, wherein Vice was triumphant, is brought to a Concluſion; but where a depraved People falls, ſeveral new States & Kingdoms riſe upon its Ruins. A brave and hardy Race ſprings up, amongſt whom are again cultivated all thoſe Virtues which are familiar to Kingdoms in their early Periods. And thus are the Seeds of Virtue continually ſown.

who was not ſuſpected of being "righteous over-much;" That "we "cannot have a greater Sign of the Ruin of any People, than their "Impiety to God in the Immorality of their Manners." We avail ourſelves of this Authority, becauſe of a ſtrange Affectation of late amongſt us, of giving the Preference to human and profane Authors, rather than to the Word of God.

To ſuffer the People to ſtupify themſelves with Pleaſures & Feaſts, with Shows and Luxury, with Vanity and Delicacy; to diſpoſſeſs them of all things ſolid & valuable, & leave them fond of ridiculous Trifles, is to make the greateſt Advances to a deſpotic Power, and from thence to Deſtruction. — See Knox's Eſſays, No. 11. On the Tendency of moral Profligacy to deſtroy Civil Liberty.

SERMON V.

On the ſame Subject.

Prov. xiv. 34. "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, "but Sin is a Reproach to any People."

Having already ſhewn that the Conſtitution of things by which the World is divided into ſeveral diſtinct Societies and Kingdoms, and by which thoſe Kingdoms become ſubject to Changes, Revolutions, and Overthrow, is, upon the Whole, not only favourable to Virtue and the Public-Good, but generally depends upon it: I am now,

II. To ſee what Influence the due Conſideration of this Doctrine ought to have upon us, in Regard to the regulating our Lives and Converſations.

And here, The Queſtion is, How can we beſt ſecure to ourſelves our preſent Eſtabliſhment, and the Proſperity of our Country?

Can it be by a Continuance in, and Increaſe of our Wickedneſs? If ſo, - Let us go on and proſper. - Let the Sons of Violence, and of Riot, invent, (if

it

it be poſſible,) ſome NEW Offences againſt Heaven, ſome unheard-of, bold Impieties, to terrify even God himſelf in his Wrath, and ſecure us againſt Omnipotence. But, we muſt anſwer, that "God is greater than Man," and that no one ever yet hardened himſelf againſt him, and proſpered."

If then, a Security cannot, in this Way, be had; can we, in any other Way, aſſure the Favour of God towards us? Yea, "Them that honour ME, I will honour; - and they that deſpiſe ME, ſhall be lightly eſteemed."

As Well-Wiſhers, therefore, to our Country, at leaſt for our own Sakes; indeed, as Well-Wiſhers to Mankind in general, as Chriſtians, let us behave as becomes the Favourites of Heaven, and God will aſſuredly continue to us his Protection and benign Providence over us: For, "to the Good, God is a continual Safeguard."

We can, therefore, by no Means, more effectually eſtabliſh ourſelves, than by a faithful and diligent Diſcharge of every Chriſtian Duty: "But if we ſhall ſtill do wickedly, we ſhall be conſumed, both we and our King."

This the Scripture fully declares to be the ſettled Courſe of God's Providence and Dealings with the

Sons

Sons of Men; and Experience hath made it good in all Ages. — At the firſt Formation of all things, we find that the Pleaſure of the Almighty ſtood on the Condition of our Obedience to him. "In the Day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die."

Again, - When Cain was ſmitten with the heavy Oppreſſions of his Conſcience for his evil Deeds, the Angel of the Lord comforted him with theſe Words: "If thou doeſt WELL, ſhalt thou not be accepted? but if thou doeſt NOT well, Sin lieth at the Door." And, (not to multiply Citations to this Purpoſe,) we find in the Revelations, that "Bleſſed are they who do the Commandments, for they only have a Right to the Tree of Life."

So that from Beginning to End, This is the Tenor of the Whole, that "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People." And,

Agreeably to theſe Aſſertions, all along the Hiſtory of the Old-Teſtament, we find the interchangeable Providences of God towards the People of Iſrael always ſuited to their Manners: They were conſtantly proſperous or afflicted according as Piety and Virtue flouriſhed amongſt them. (A) Indeed,

God

(A) The Egyptians oppreſſed Iſrael near 200 Years; - The Canaanites, 20; - The Moabites, 18; - The Philiſtines, 40; - The Aſſyrians and Caldeans, 300; - Antiochus Epiphanes, 40, &c. till at laſt, being ſubdued by the Romans, they were ſubjected; and, in the End, diſperſed; as they are to this Day.

God not only exerciſed this his Providence towards his own People, but dealt thus alſo with other Nations: The Roman Empire, whilſt the Virtue of that People remained firm, was firm alſo; but upon the Diſſolution of their Manners, became broken & diſſolved. And;

Tho God, (in the Adminiſtration of his Juſtice,) be not confined to Precedents, and we cannot argue from Scripture Examples, that the Providences of God towards other Nations, ſhall in all Circumſtances be conformable to his Dealings with the People of Iſrael; yet thus much may, with great Probability be collected from them, [viz] that as God always bleſſed that People while they were obedient to him; and followed them with his Judgments when they rebelled againſt him, ſo will He with other Nations alſo; becauſe the Reaſon of thoſe Diſpenſations, (as to the Main and Subſtance of them,) ſeems to be perpetual, and founded upon That which can never change, [viz] the Juſtice of the Divine Providence.

From the Account thus given of God's Dealing with other Nations, we may not only form a Judgement of the Behaviour He requires of us; but alſo what we may expect from his providential Adminiſtration in general. (A) — And indeed, It

(A) England was, at firſt, a Monarchy under the Britons, and then

It is evidently the Intention of the Hiſtorical Part of Scripture, (ſeconded and confirmed by ſucceſſive ſimilar Examples,) that we ſhould ſo apply and underſtand it, as to make it an Admonition of our own Duty to God, and a Sort of Impiety towards his Providence, ſhoud we be negligent in it.

As Kingdoms, therefore, are raiſed and upheld by Providence, not only for the Good of Mankind and Support of Virtue, but do generally depend upon it, it follows, that if we would engage the Bleſſing of Heaven on our Country, we muſt firmly adhere to whatever Principles are the moſt excellent in our Conſtitution, and maintain every worthy Part of our National Character.

Tho it falls not to the Share of all to direct Counſels, or tread the Paths of Danger; (A) yet we have ſtill

then a Province under the Romans; after that, it was divided into ſeven Kingdoms under the Saxons; - after them the Danes; - then the Normans, and now a Monarchy again under the Engliſh; and all this by God's Providence, who ſuffered his own peculiar People, the Jews, to be under diverſe Manners of Government at diverſe Times, as firſt, under Patriarchs, as Abraham, Iſaac, &c. - then under Captains, as Moſes, Joſhua, &c. - then under Judges, as Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, &c. - then under High-Prieſts, as Eli & Samuel; - then under Kings, as Saul, David, &c. - then under Captains and High-Prieſts again, as Zorobabel, Judas Maccabeus, and his Brethren; until the Government was at laſt brought under the Power of the Romans.

(A) Non cuivis Homini contingit adire Corinthum.

ſtill our Share in the publick Welfare, and are, (in more Ways than we may imagine,) capable of real Service; - By our Prayers to God, we may, peradventure, avert threatned Evil; and by good Conduct, we may make his Face ſo ſhine on us, as to give us every Good, and turn from us evrey Evil; for, from the Juſtice of the divine Providence, and alſo from the Tendency of the thing itſelf, (as we have ſeen,) "Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation."

I ſhall here call-to-mind ſome principal Parts of that Character by which this Nation hath been diſtinguiſhed in former Times, and for the Sake of which it hath been hitherto preſerved. The Cultivation of which will be our only true Way of doing Sevice to our Country.

And here, eſpecially in all doubtful & dangerous Times, where can we begin better than by reflecting on that Liberty, and thoſe numerous Bleſſings belonging to Liberty, which have been handed down to us by our great Forefathers; together with that Firmneſs and Bravery which they ever ſhewed in the Defence of theſe Bleſſings. (A)

Our excellent Conſtitution hath been the Work of

(A) *Aliæ Nationes Servitutem pati poſſunt, Populi Anglicani eſt propria Libertas.*

of Ages. The Seeds of Liberty were ſown early in our Land, but it required much Time to bring them to Maturity. Our Kingdom and our Conſtitution grew up together Both from rude Beginnings.

Thoſe ſmall (A) Diſtricts, into which theſe Iſlands were at firſt divided, after many ſharp Conflicts amongſt themſelves, were by Degrees united to each other, till at Length our Kingdom grew-up to its full Proportion. And, ſo much do the Strength and Welfare of our Country depend upon this Union, that little do They regard, or at leaſt underſtand, its true Intereſt, who would endeavour to divide again a Kingdom which it hath been the Work of Ages to unite; and to reduce it back to its firſt Principles, by tracing over again that Line of Diſtinction between its ſeveral Parts which hath been happily obliterated. Our Conſtitution, in the ſame Manner, which was in its Original an imperfect Mixture of an untamed Wildneſs with arbitrary Power, after various Struggles in which it was more than once brought into the utmoſt Danger, came at Length to that well-poiſed Frame of Government wherein all

(B) It may be obſerved that Kingdoms moſt diſtinguiſhed for Bravery and a Spirit of Liberty, (which never ſubſiſted long apart,) have ariſen, like the Britiſh, from amidſt ſmall States which gave a long Exerciſe to their Valour before they were ſubdued. Such were the Grecian States and the Roman Republic.

all the Parts ballance and ſuſtain each other.

Surely, we do not want, at this Time, to be convinced of the Value of theſe Bleſſings, nor need any Exhortations to ſtir us up to the Defence of a Kingdom, a Conſtitution, a Religion, like ours. But,

2dly, Our Nation is not characteriſed by the rougher and warlike Endowments alone; She is no leſs adorned by the ſofter and more amiable Accompliſhments of Peace. She has Trophies ſtill more glorious than thoſe which have been won in the Field of Battle. Her Triumphs in the Cauſe of Truth are not leſs numerous than in the Cauſe of Liberty. And whilſt we of the miniſterial Order cannot be thought to be unconcerned in the former Part of this Exhortation, ſince the Principles of true Honour and Virtue which are by us taught, are the only Foundation of true Courage, yet are we more immediately intereſted in the Cultivation, and in the Support of this Part of our national Character. Our immediate Province is to contribute as far as we are able to the Encouragement & Improvement of all uſeful Science, and to lay ourſelves out in defending and enlarging thoſe Acquiſitions which our Country hath made in Knowledge. But chiefly we muſt remember, that it is not the Intereſts of LEARNING alone which are intruſted in our Hands. Learn-

ing

ning hath in all Times maintained a cloſe Alliance with Virtue and Religion. When after a long Exile it again returned to the weſtern World, it returned but to aſſiſt in the Revival of true Religion: and ever ſince that Time have they been making their Progreſs over Europe together. With what Zeal, then, muſt it inſpire us in our Studies, to hope, that under Providence they may be ſubſervient to the ſacred Intereſts of Religion! And if even pagan Learning was rendered ſerviceable to Chriſtianity at its firſt Introduction in the World, how great would be our Reproach if Chriſtian Learning ſhould not!

This leads me to conſider a third Part of our National Character, and which alone can ſtamp a true Value on thoſe which have been already mentioned, (viz) a Zeal for true Religion. Religion hath found an Aſylum with us when driven from every other Part of the World. When Ignorance, Superſtition, and eccleſiaſtical Tyranny have elſwhere uſurped her Place, we have ſtood firm in her Cauſe; - have reaſoned, - have acted, - have ſuffered in her Defence; have maintained her in all her Rights, and planted her in her native Purity in foreign Lands.

To the Service of Religion, therefore, ſhould all our Succeſſes, all the Triumphs whether of our Valour or our Learning, be devoted. And! may we

not

not here indulge the pleaſing Hope, that ſome Circumſtances in the preſent Situation of the World ſeem to open out to that glorious Time, when Chriſtianity ſhall be univerſally eſtabliſhed! Why elſe, and to what other End hath it been ordained, that the Chriſtian Powers are almoſt the only COMMERCIAL Ones, and that all the great Diſcoveries in the new weſtern World have been made by them? And ſtill more particularly, why hath it been ordained that WE, the moſt conſiderable amongſt the Profeſſors of the truly reformed Chriſtianity, have, of all others, the moſt extenſive Commerce?

We can hardly ſuppoſe theſe ſtriking Circumſtances to be the Effect of Chance, or to be permitted only for mere temporal Advantages. Chriſtianity can never act under more favourable Circumſtances.

Paganiſm & Mahometaniſm lie ſtill: whilſt Chriſtianity, (with all the Means of Converſion in her Hands,) carries on a conſtant Intercourſe with the remoteſt Corners of the World. The Period ſeems to be haſtening on, when the Diſcovery of the whole Globe ſhall be compleated, and when by Means of Commerce every Part of the World ſhall be known to each other. Do not all theſe things ſeem clearly to be a Prelude to that glorious Time, (for the Time will come,) when "the Earth ſhall be filled with

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"the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea: when God will turn to the People a pure Language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to ſerve him with one Conſent: and when the Lord ſhall be King over all the Earth."

Such is the Dignity of that National Character which we are called upon to ſupport. Whilſt therefore, we reflect with Veneration on thoſe great Names with which the Records of our Country abound; Thoſe Worthies who have gained or eſtabliſhed our Rights; Thoſe exalted Geniuſes who have employed their Talents in the Diſcoveries and Improvements of uſeful Arts for the Benefit of Mankind; Thoſe awful Men who have defended the Truth with all the Powers of Reaſon and Learning, Who have bled, - Who have fallen for Religion — The great Examples ſhould fire us, - ſhould animate us to the Defence of our Civil and Religious Liberty, and inſpirit us with a noble Emulation to act the Part of good Men and good Chriſtians, to practice Virtue and Charity, and by all the Means that Heaven hath put in our Power, to promote the Public-Good. We ſhould remember that their Examples have taught us, that to be a BRITON is not merely to be born in a certain Climate, to be a

Native

Native of a flouriſhing and beautiful Iſland, bleſſed with a temperate Air and a fruitful Soil, where Art and Nature pour forth all their Riches: It is to be more, It is to be a Patron of Liberty, of Learning and Religion.

Theſe Qualities have a natural Tendency to ſubdue the wild Paſſions of Men, and make the Kingdom ſecure which is eſtabliſhed in Righteouſneſs. Only let us be careful to give them a real Exiſtence in our Lives and Converſations; "and God, even our own God, will give us his Bleſſing."

Theſe Advantages can never be wanting under the Conduct of a Prince, who governs in the Fear of the Lord: the Senſe of his own Duty, and his Regard for the Honour of God, will incline him in all Caſes to promote and encourage the Service of his Maker; & to fill up that Character, which, when juſtly ſuſtained, is both the Ornament & Strength of the Crown. To ſuch Princes the Church of God owes her temporal Proſperity, her liberal Maintenance, & in great Meaſure, even the Purity of her Religion: to ſuch She owes the Temples of God, which are (in every Nation) the trueſt Indications of Royal Piety and Magnificence: To ſuch Princes — but why do I deal to ſuch Princes in common, the Praiſes which ſeem to be the diſtinguiſhing Marks, and the Excellencies peculiar to our own. Happy

Happy Britain! that canſt ſo eaſily diſcover the Features of thine own Prince, whenever the Image of a GOOD One is ſet before thee.

That the Liberties of his People are dear to him we had an early Proof. And, conſiſtently with his firſt Beginning, we ſee him ſteadily carrying on the Operations of Government on the ſame free and generous Principles, which, (we truſt,) will ſhed a bright Luſtre round his ſetting Sun to his lateſt Days; no longer ruling by a Party, no longer ſupporting his Adminiſtration by the Force of Corruption, but contented to recommend his Meaſures to his Subjects by their Uprightneſs and Integrity alone.

His Love of Learning cannot be called in queſtion, ſince he himſelf patronizes and encourages it.

Of his Regard for Virtue and Religion his whole Life is, and hath been one Proof. Far from yielding to thoſe uncommon Temptations with which a Monarch is always ſurrounded; far from thinking that his elevated Station can give a Sanction to Liberties which would be condemned in an inferiour Station, we ſee him ambitious only of leading the Way in Duty, and treading in the Paths of Virtue with all the Severity of the hoary Sage. Long hath

He

He, by the Force of his Example, checked that unbounded Levity, that univerſal Diſſipation and Attachment to Pleaſure, to which all Ranks ſeemed to be devoted. All along hath he nobly attemped to bring Religion into Credit amongſt the great and faſhionable Part of the Nation, by his own conſtant Attendance on the public Worſhip of God, and his exemplary Behaviour there; by the Influence of Religion ſhining through every Relation of Life; by manifeſting a conſtant Senſe of his Dependance on the King of Kings, and thus ſhewing that he hath made a juſt Eſtimate of all human Greatneſs.

The very Example of ſuch a Ruler has a natural Tendency to promote the Peace and Welfare of the Kingdom. When Virtue ſhines from the Throne, it warms the Hearts of all below it, and the Advantage of the Station gives it an Influence not to be reſiſted; Religion in the Height of Greatneſs is an amiable Sight, and the People will inſenſibly learn to imitate what they cannot help admiring.

May the Work of Reformation proſper in his Hands; & may Virtue, deſcending from the Throne, ſpread itſelf amongſt every Rank of the People!

Theſe Colours are not ſpread by the Pencil of Adulation: far be baſe-born Flattery from every free Britiſh Heart; far hence, from this Land of Liberty,

Liberty, let it fly, to ſome leſs happy Region, where a People of Slaves tremble at the Nod of a Tyrant. Or ſhould there be found even Britons ſo degenerate as to ſtoop to the mean Art of Slaves: at leaſt, let nothing ſervile or ignoble ever enter within the Breaſts of the SACRED and VENERABLE Order, where nothing but liberal and manly Sentiments ſhould be nouriſhed; and from whoſe Mouths the Principles of true Liberty ſhould be ſteadily infuſed into the Minds of thoſe who attend their Inſtruction, that their Souls may be filled with every great and noble Purpoſe. — It is our Duty to enforce and recommend Loyalty both by Precept and Example; and Loyalty can never be ſo effectually recommended, as where it can be planted in the Heart and the Affections. It is our Duty by every Motive to recommend Piety and a Regard for Religion. And whilſt bad Examples are every where ſpreading their fatal Contagion, it would be ſacrificing too much to Delicacy, to ſuffer ſo fair an Occaſion, as This, which our Sovereign gives us, of applying ſo great an Example to the Intereſts of Virtue, to be loſt.

" Let us praiſe famous Men, and our Forefathers that begat us - The Lord hath wrought great Glory by them, thro his great Power from the Beginning, - Such as did bear Rule in their Kingdoms,

Men renouned for their Power, giving Counſel by their Underſtanding, - Leaders of the People by their Counſels, and by their Knowledge of Learning meet for the People, wiſe and eloquent in their Inſtructions - Rich Men furniſhed with Ability, living peaceably in their Habitations - all theſe were honoured in their Generations, and were the Glory of their Times.

"There be of them that have left a Name behind them, that their Praiſes might be reported, and ſome there be which have no Memorial, who are periſhed as tho' they had never been, and are become as tho' they had never been born, and their Children after them - But theſe were merciful Men, whoſe Righteouſneſs hath not been forgotten - With their Seed ſhall continually remain a good Inheritance, and their Children are within the Covenant - Their Seed ſtands-faſt, & their Children for their Sakes - Their Seed ſhall remain forever, and their Glory ſhall not be blotted out - their Bodies are buried in Peace, but their Name liveth forevermore. The People will tell of their Wiſdom, and the Congregation will ſhew forth their Praiſe.

"Enoch pleaſed the Lord, & was tranſlated, being an Example of Repentance to all Generations.

"Noah was found perfect & righteous in the Time

of

of Wrath, he was taken in Exchange for the World; there was he left as a Remnant unto the Earth, when the Flood came - An everlasting Covenant was made with him, that all Flesh should perish no more by the Flood.

"Abraham was a great Father of many People, in Glory was there none like unto him, who kept the Law of the Most-High, and was in Covenant with him: he established the Covenant in his Flesh, and when he was proved, he was found faithful, therefore he assured him by an Oath, that he would bless the Nations in his Seed, and that he would multiply him as the Dust of the Earth, and exalt his Seed as the Stars, and cause them to inherit from Sea to Sea, and from the River unto the uttermost Part of the Land.

"With Isaac did he establish likewise, (for Abraham his Father's Sake,) the Blessing of all Men, and the Covenant.

"And made it rest upon the Head of Jacob, he acknowledged him in his Blessing, and gave him an Heritage, and divided his Portion.

"The Time would fail me to speak of the Praise of Moses, of Aaron & Phinees - of the Praise of Joshua, of Caleb and Samuel - Of the Praise of Nathan, of David and Solomon - of the Praise of Elias, Eliseus,

and

and Ezekias - Of the Praiſe of Jeremy, of Ezekiel, Zorobabel, of Jeſus the Son of Joſedec, of Nehemias of Enoch, of Joſeph, of Sem & Seth, of Adam, and of Simon the Son of Onias," as they are particularly mentioned by the wiſe Son of Sirach, and extolled by him. (A)

To

(A) The Lives of Heroes have enriched Hiſtory, and Hiſtory in Requital has embelliſhed and heightened the Lives of Heroes; ſo that it is no eaſy Matter to determine which of the Two is more beholden to the other: either Hiſtorians, to thoſe who have furniſhed them with ſo great and noble Matter to work upon; or thoſe great Men, to thoſe Writers that have conveyed their Names and Atchievements down to the Admiration of After-Ages.

Ut Artes Memoriâ reconditæ ſtabiles permanent: Ità præclara Hominum Facinora, Scriptis Poetarum celebrata, perpetuò vigent.

O ſacer, et magnus Vatum Labor! Omnia Fato
Eripis, et donas Populis mortalibus Ævum.
Carmina quam tribuunt, Fama perennis erit.
Dignum Laude Virum, Muſa vetat mori.

Hiſtoria Teſtis Temporum, Lux Veritatis, Vita Memoriæ, Magiſtra Vitæ, Nuntia Vetuſtatis, quâ Voce Res mortales Immortalitati traduntur.

Virtuous and brave Actions will gain Reputation.

Excellency in any thing or Perſon, is the Gift of God, and demands its proper Praiſe and Honour; ſo He who excels another has a Right to be preferred before him in the Eſteem and Value of the World; to have his Light reflected with more Splendour, and his Excellencies reſounded with higher Applauſes. He therefore, who, out of a conceited Opinion of his own Excellencies, detains from a worthy Perſon thoſe Acknowledgments that are due to his Virtues, robs Virtue itſelf of one of her faireſt Jewels, and is highly unjuſt and diſhoneſt.

If therefore, we would perpetuate our Fame or Reputation, we muſt do things worth Writing, or write things worth Reading.

To Conclude - Let us look with Reverence on that obvious but awful Diſpenſation, by which the Behaviour of every Individual is connected with the Welfare or the Sufferings of ſo many Perſons beſides himſelf: - As a BAD Man is a publick Calamity, which yet under the Direction of the Father of all, will terminate, we hope, in Good: ſo a pious and eminently worthy Perſon is an univerſal Bleſſing; reaping the Fruit of his Virtues in his own Happineſs, ſpreading the Voice of Joy and Health throughout the Dwellings of the Righteous, and entailing the Divine Bleſſing on thoſe that come after him, to the lateſt Generations. But,

Whilſt we glory in the Title of Engliſhmen and Britons, let us not forget that we are to ſupport the ſtill higher Titles of Men and Chriſtians. Let us remember, that however reaſonable & praiſe-worthy it may be at preſent to cultivate the more private Affections, the Love of a Family, a particular Society, a Country; yet the Time will come, when all theſe partial Affections, theſe narrow Attachments ſhall be obliterated; when the godlike Plan of Chriſtianity ſhall have its full Effect, when our Hearts ſhall be enlarged, and every Boſom filled with univerſal Benevolence - The Time will come when all Diſtinctions ſhall be forgotten, but thoſe eternal Diſtinctions

tinctions of the Virtuous & the Wicked; and when the Worthy and the Good of all Nations shall be united together in eternal Bonds of Love. — Looking forward, therefore, to That Time, and with all the Affection that becomes us for our own Country, joining all the Benevolence that is due to others, let us, with the good Patriarch, confess that we are Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth; and whilst we enjoy and are thankful for our present Happiness, let us like him wait for those better Promises, of which we have a Prospect afar off: and being with him persuaded of them, and embracing them in our Minds, let us direct our Desires towards that better, that common, that heavenly Country, where we trust that the Good selected from all mankind shall meet in endless Bliss.

The End.

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